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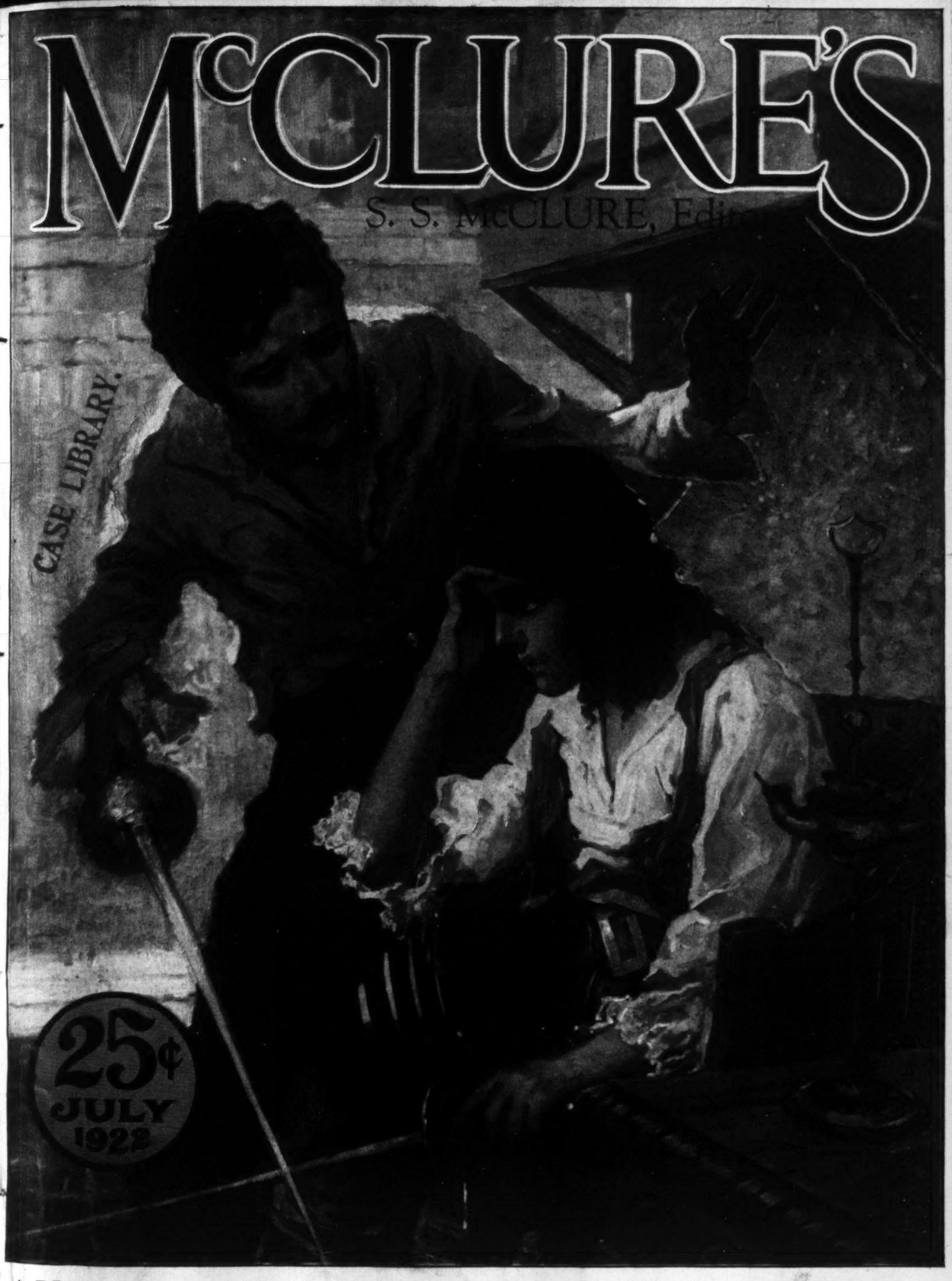

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Volume 54 Number 5

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## Contents *for* July, 1922

| | | Page |
|---|---|---|
| My Life and Work (*Part* III) | Henry Ford in Collaboration with Samuel Crowther | 11 |
| Don Cristobal de Zaurigi (*Serial; Part* I) Illustrated by Bert Salg | Ernest Goodwin | 20 |
| The Real Czarina | Julie Dehn | 42 |
| Corabel's Man (*Short Story*) | Dorothy Thomas | 53 |
| The Renaissance of the Buffalo | Walter Noble Burns | 62 |
| Velvet Feet (*Short Story*) Illustrated by J. E. Allen | Helen Topping Miller | 64 |
| A Negro Named Jones | Alma and Paul Ellerbe | 72 |
| The Keys of the City (*Short Story*) Illustrated by J. Henry | Caleb Wrath | 81 |
| Unencumbered Bachelor (*Short Story*) Illustrated by Will James | Eleanor Ecob Sawyer | 88 |
| The Women in Room 27 (*A Story of the American Secret Service in France*) | Major C. E. Russell | 94 |
| The Girl Who Couldn't Say No (*Novelette*) Illustrated by Irma Dérèmaux | Dana Gatlin | 100 |
| The Breaking Point (*Serial*) Illustrated by T. D. Skidmore | Mary Roberts Rinehart | 110 |
| Choosing a Bond (*Financial Article*) | Paul Tomlinson | 124 |

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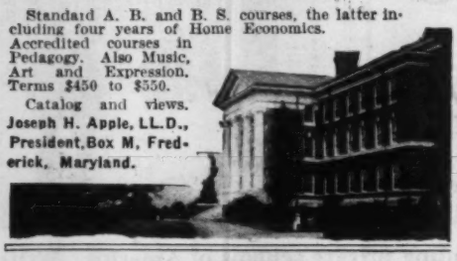

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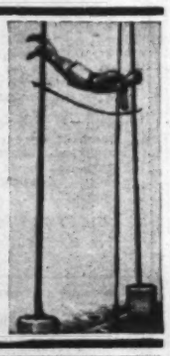

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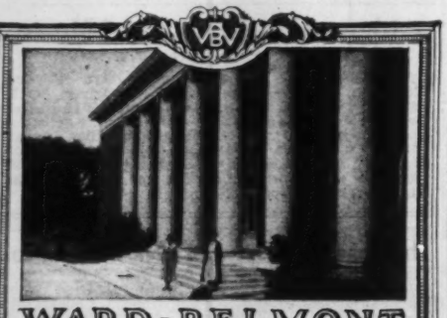


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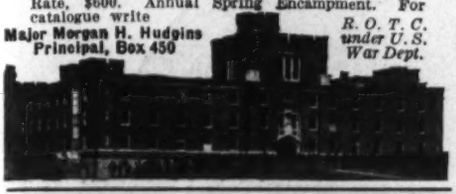
*R. O. T. C. under U. S. War Dept.*



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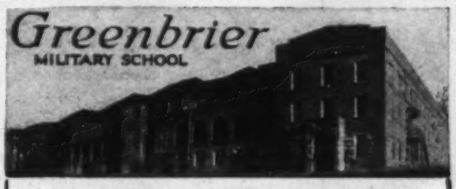


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*When writing to the schools for information kindly mention* McCLURE'S MAGAZINE.

# Concerning Stories of the American Secret Service in France

East Orange, N. J.,
May 13, 1922.

Editor McCLURE'S MAGAZINE.
Dear Sir:

I have been much interested in the war story by Major Russell ("The Firebugs"), and shall watch for succeeding numbers with eagerness. Can it be true? Is it true? We are on the *qui vive*—all to whom we have read it.

Yours very truly,
MRS. M. K. DAVIS.

---

"CAN IT BE TRUE?" "*IS* IT TRUE?"

Such is the burden of the many letters that we have received regarding "The Firebugs," published in the May issue, the first of the remarkable series of stories of the American Secret Service in France, by Major C. E. Russell, now appearing each month in this magazine.

Here are two other letters that will go far towards answering these questions.

---

April 12, 1922.

Editor McCLURE'S MAGAZINE.
Dear Sir:

I have read the proofs of "The Firebugs" and "The Greatest Secret Service Story of the War."

I was in charge of the prison where Freytag was confined and I recognize the picture in "The Firebugs" as the prisoner, Freytag.

I also recollect the escape of this man, which, as I remember it, is as described. Freytag gave us a great deal of trouble while in the prison.

Very truly yours,
E. T. SHERBOURNE,
Major, 1st Army Headquarters Regiment in France.

April 12, 1922.

Editor McCLURE'S MAGAZINE.
Dear Sir:

I have read the proofs of the stories, "The Firebugs" and "The Greatest Secret Service Story of the War."

I was in the department of Criminal Investigation of the U. S. Army in France, and assisted in running down Freytag. I recognize the picture of Freytag as the one illustrated in "The Firebugs," as the man I arrested, although I did not know he was of Royal blood.

I also recollect the escape of this man from our prison. He escaped just at mess time one evening, and I was one that assisted in the chase for him, until mysteriously called off. I remember Freytag very well on account of the trouble he gave us while in confinement.

Very truly yours,
HENRY L. O'MALLEY,
Sergeant Major, D. C. I.

---

Major Russell, who was Provost Marshal at Bordeaux in 1918, has written ten of these stories, which will appear monthly in this magazine. "The Firebugs," (May); "The Murder of Private Hand," (June); and "The Women in Room 27," in this number, have already been published. "The False Alibi," (originally called "The Cheese Murder"); "The Cocaine Smugglers," "The Algerian Murderers," "The Underground Railroad," "The Woman Spy of Biarritz," "The Train Robbers," and "The Wine Swindlers," are to follow.

The Czarina and her Daughters

Left to right: Olga, Tatiana, Anastasie, Marie

VOLUME 54
No. 5

McCLURE'S

S. S. McCLURE, *Editor*

JULY
1922

# My Life and Work*

## By Henry Ford in Collaboration with Samuel Crowther

*Explaining the principles on which production is built up and the relations of machines and men. "Experts" and the phrase "It can't be done," both taboo, in the Ford plants*

### CHAPTER VI.

### GETTING INTO PRODUCTION

IF a device would save just ten per cent in time or increase results ten per cent, then its absence is always a ten per cent tax. If the time of a person is worth fifty cents an hour, a ten per cent saving is worth five cents an hour. If the owner of a skyscraper could increase his income ten per cent, he would willingly pay half the increase just to know how. The reason why he owns a skyscraper is that science has proved that certain materials, used in a given way, can save space and increase rental incomes. A building thirty stories high needs no more ground space than one five stories high. Getting along with the old style architecture costs the five-story man the income of twenty-five floors. Save ten steps a day for each of twelve thousand employees and you will have saved fifty miles of wasted motion and misspent energy.

Those are the principles on which the production of my plant was built up. They all came practically as of course. In the beginning we tried to get machinists. As the necessity for production increased it not only became apparent that not enough machinists were to be had, but also that skilled men were not necessary in production, and out of this grew a principle that I later want to present in full.

It is self-evident that a majority of the people in the world are not mentally — even if they are physically — capable of making a good living. That is, they are not capable of furnishing with their own hands a sufficient quantity of the goods which this world needs to be able to exchange their unaided product for the goods which they need. I have heard it said, in fact I believe it is quite a current thought, that we have taken skill out of work. We have not. We have put in skill. We have put a higher skill into planning, management, and tool building, and the results of that skill are enjoyed by the man who is not skilled. This I shall later enlarge upon.

We have to recognize the unevenness in human mental equipments. If every job in our place required skill, the place would never have existed. Sufficiently skilled men to the number needed could not have been trained in a hundred years. A million men working by hand could not even approximate our present daily output. No one could manage a million men. But more important than that, the product of the unaided hands of those million men could not be sold at a price in consonance with buying power. And even if it were possible to imagine such an aggregation and imagine its management and correlation, just think of the area that it would have to occupy! How many of the men would be engaged, not in producing, but in merely carrying from place to place what the other men had produced? I cannot see how under such conditions the men could possibly be paid more than ten or twenty cents a day — for of course it is not the employer who pays wages. He only handles the money. It is the product that pays the wages and it is the management that arranges the production so that the product may pay the wages.

### A MIRACLE OF EFFICIENCY — ASSEMBLING

THE more economical methods of production did not begin all at once. They began gradually — just as we gradually began to make our own parts. Model "T" was the first motor that we made ourselves. The great economies began in assembling and then extended to other sections, so that, while to-day we have skilled mechanics in plenty, they do not produce automobiles — they make it easy for others to produce them. Our skilled men are the tool makers, the experimental workmen, the machinists, and the pattern makers. They are as good as any men in the world — so good, indeed, that they should not be wasted in doing that which the machines they contrive can do better. The rank and file of men come to us unskilled; they learn their jobs within a few hours or a few days. If they do not learn within that time they will never be of any use to us. These men are, many of them, foreigners, and all that is required before they are taken on is that they should be potentially able to do enough work to pay the overhead charges on the floor space they occupy. They do not have to be able-bodied men. We have jobs that require great physical strength — although they are rapidly lessening; we have other jobs that require no strength whatsoever — jobs which, as far as strength is concerned, might be attended to by a child of three.

It is not possible without going deeply into technical processes, to present the whole development of manufacturing, step by step, and in the order in which each thing came about. I do not know that this could be done, because something has happened nearly every day and nobody can keep track. Take at random a number

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of the changes. From them it is possible not only to gain some idea of what will happen when this world is put on a production basis, but also to see how much more we pay for things than we ought to, and how much lower wages are than they ought to be, and what a vast field remains to be explored. The Ford company is only a little way along on the journey.

A Ford car contains about five thousand parts—that is counting screws, nuts and all. Some of the parts are fairly bulky and others are almost watch parts. In our first assembling we simply started to put a car together at a spot on the floor and workmen brought to it the parts as they were needed in exactly the same way as one builds a house. When we started to make parts it was natural to create a single department of the factory to make that part, but usually one workman performed all of the operations necessary on a small part. The rapid press of production made it necessary to devise plans of production that would avoid having the workers falling over one another. The undirected worker spends more of his time walking about for materials and tools than he does in working; he gets small pay because pedestrianism is not a highly paid line.

The first step forward in assembly came when we began taking the work to the men instead of the men to the work. We now have two general principles in all operations — that a man shall never have to take more than one step, if possibly it can be avoided, and that no man need ever stoop over.

The principles of assembly are these:

(1) Place the tools and the men in the sequence of the operation so that each component part shall travel the least possible distance while in the process of finishing.

(2) Use work slides or some other form of carrier so that when a workman completes his operation, he drops the part always in the same place — which place must always be the most convenient place to his hand — and if possible have gravity carry the part to the next workman for his operation.

(3) Use sliding assembling lines by which the parts to be assembled are delivered at convenient distances.

The net result of the application of these principles is the reduction of the necessity for thought on the part of the worker and the reduction of his movements to a minimum. He does as nearly as possible only one thing with only one movement.

The assembling of the chassis is, from the point of view of the non-mechanical mind, our most interesting and perhaps best known operation, and at one time it was an exceedingly important operation. We now ship out the parts for assembly at the point of distribution.

Along about April 1, 1913, we first tried the experiment of an assembly line. We tried it on assembling the fly-wheel magneto. We try everything in a little way first — we will rip out anything, once we discover a better way, but we have to know absolutely that the new way is going to be better than the old before we do anything drastic. I believe that this was the first moving line ever installed. The idea came in a general way from the overhead trolley that the Chicago packers use in dressing beef. We had previously assembled the flywheel magneto in the usual method. With one workman doing a complete job he could turn out from thirty-five to forty pieces in a nine-hour day, or about twenty minutes to an assembly. What he did alone was then spread into twenty-nine operations; that cut down the assembly to thirteen minutes, ten seconds. Then we raised the height of the line eight inches — this was in 1914 — and cut the time to seven minutes. Further experimenting with the speed that the work should move at cut the time down to five minutes. In short, the result is this: by the aid of scientific study one man is now able to do somewhat more than four did only a comparatively few years ago. That line established the efficiency of the method of assembly and we now use it everywhere. The assembling of the motor, formerly done by one man, is now divided into eighty-four operations — those men do the work that three times their number formerly did. In a short time we tried out the plan on the chassis.

About the best we had done in stationary chassis assembling was an average of twelve hours and twenty-eight minutes per chassis. We tried the experiment of drawing the chassis with a rope and windlass down a line two hundred fifty feet long. Six assemblers traveled with the chassis and picked up the parts from piles along the line. This rough experiment reduced the time to five hours, fifty minutes per chassis. In the early part of 1914 we elevated the assembly line. We had adopted the policy of "man-high" work; we had one line twenty-six and three-quarter inches and another twenty-four and one-half inches from the floor —to suit squads of different heights. The waist high arrangement and a further subdivision of work so that each man had fewer movements cut down the labor time per chassis to one hour, thirty-three minutes. Only the chassis was then assembled in the line. The body was placed on in "John R Street" — the famous street that runs through our Highland Park factories. Now the line assembles the whole car.

### What Manufacturers Want Most

IT must not be imagined, however, that all this worked out as quickly as it sounds. The speed of the moving work had to be carefully tried out; in the fly-wheel magneto we first had a speed of sixty inches per minute. That was too fast. Then we tried eighteen inches per minute. That was too slow. Finally we settled on forty-four inches per minute. The idea is that a man must not be hurried in his work — he must have every second necessary but not a single unnecessary second. We have worked out speeds for each assembly, for the success of the chassis assembly caused us gradually to overhaul our entire method of manufacturing and to put all assembling in mechanically driven lines. The chassis assembling line, for instance, goes at a pace of six feet per minute; the front axle assembly line goes at one hundred eighty-nine inches per minute. In the chassis assembling are forty-five separate operations or stations. The first men fasten four mud guard brackets to the chassis frame; the motor arrives on the tenth operation, and so on in detail. Some men do only one or two small operations; others do more. The man who places a part does not fasten it — the part may not be fully in place until several operations later. The man who puts in a bolt does not put on the nut; the man who puts on the nut does not tighten it. On operation number thirty-four the budding motor gets its gasoline; it has previously received lubrication; on operation number forty-four the radiator is filled with water and on operation number forty-five the car drives out onto John R Street.

Essentially the same ideas have been applied to the assembling of the motor. In October, 1913, it required nine hours and fifty-four minutes of labor time to assemble one motor; six months later, by the moving assembly method, this time had been reduced to five

hours and fifty-six minutes. Every piece of work in the shops moves; it may move on hooks on overhead chains going to assembly in the exact order in which the parts are required; it may travel on a moving platform, or it may go by gravity, but the point is that there is no lifting or trucking of anything other than materials. Materials are brought in on small trucks or trailers operated by cut-down Ford chasses, which are sufficiently mobile and quick to get in and out of any aisle where they may be required to go. No workman has anything to do with moving or lifting anything. That is all in a separate department — the department of transportation.

We started assembling a motor car in a single factory. Then, as we began to make parts, we began to departmentalize so that each department would do only one thing. As the factory is now organized, each department makes only a single part or assembles a part. A department is a little factory in itself. The part comes into it as a raw material or as a casting, goes through the sequence of machines and heat treatments, or whatever may be required, and leaves that department finished. It was only because of transport ease that the departments were grouped together when we started to manufacture. I did not know that such minute divisions would be possible; but as our production grew and departments multiplied, we actually changed from making automobiles to making parts. Then we found that we had another new discovery, which was that, by no means all of the parts had to be made in one factory. It was not really a discovery — it was something in the nature of going around in a circle to my first manufacturing when I bought the motors and probably ninety per cent. of the parts. When we began to make our own parts we practically took for granted that they all had to be made in the one factory — that there was some special virtue in having a single roof over the manufacture of the entire car. We have now developed away from this. If we build any more large factories, it will be only because the making of a single part must be in such tremendous volume as to require a large unit. I hope that in the course of time the big Highland Park plant will be doing only one or two things. The casting has already been taken away from it and has gone to the River Rouge plant. So now we are on our way back to where we started from — excepting that, instead of buying our parts on the outside, we are beginning to make them in our own factories on the outside.

This is a development which holds exceptional consequences, for it means, as I shall enlarge in a later chapter, that highly standardized, highly subdivided industry need no longer become concentrated in large plants with all the inconveniences of transportation and housing that hamper large plants. A thousand or five hundred men ought to be enough in a single factory; then there would be no problem of transporting them to work or away from work and there would be no slums or any of the other unnatural ways of living incident to the overcrowding that must take place if the workmen are to live within reasonable distance of a very large plant.

Highland Park now has five hundred departments. Down at our Piquette plant we had only eighteen departments, and formerly at Highland Park we had only one hundred and fifty departments. This illustrates how far we are going in the manufacture of parts.

Hardly a week passes without some improvement being made somewhere in machine or process, and sometimes this is made in defiance of what is called "the best shop practice." I recall that a machine manufacturer was once called into conference on the building of a special machine. The specifications called for an output of two hundred per hour.

"This is a mistake," said the manufacturer, "you mean two hundred a day — no machine can be forced to two hundred an hour."

The company officer sent for the man who had designed the machine and they called his attention to the specification. He said:

"Yes, what about it?"

"It can't be done," said the manufacturer positively; "no machine built will do that — it is out of the question."

"Out of the question!" answered the engineer; "if you will come down to the main floor you will see one doing it; we built one to see if it could be done and now we want more like it."

*A recent photograph of Henry Ford*

The factory keeps no record of experiments. The foremen and superintendents remember what has been done. If a certain method has formerly been tried and failed, somebody will remember it — but I am not particularly anxious for the men to remember what someone else has tried to do in the past, for then we might quickly accumulate far too many things that could not be done. That is one of the troubles with extensive records. If you keep on recording all of your failures you will shortly have a list showing that there is nothing left for you to try — whereas it by no means follows because one man has failed in a certain method, another man will not succeed.

They told us we could not cast gray iron by our endless chain method and I believe there is a record of failures. But we are doing it. The man who carried through our work either did not know or paid no attention to the previous figures. Likewise, we were told that it was out of the question to pour the hot iron directly from the blast furnaces into mold. The usual method is to run the iron into pigs, let them season for a time, and then re-melt them for casting.

But at the River Rouge plant we are casting directly from cupolas that are filled from the blast furnaces. Then, too, a record of failures — particularly if it is a dignified and well-authenticated record — deters a young man from trying. We get some of our best results from letting fools rush in where angels fear to tread.

### The Barred Word — "Impossible"

None of our men are "experts." We have most unfortunately found it necessary to get rid of a man as soon as he thinks himself an expert — because no one ever considers himself expert if he really knows his job. A man who knows a job sees so much more to be done than he has done, that he is always pressing forward and never gives up an instant of thought to how good and how efficient he is. Thinking always ahead, thinking always of trying to do more, brings a state of mind in which nothing is impossible. The moment one gets into the "expert" state of mind a great number of things become impossible.

I refuse to recognize that there are impossibilities. I cannot discover that anyone knows enough about anything on this earth definitely to say what is and what is not possible. The right kind of experience, the right kind of technical training, ought to enlarge the mind and reduce the number of impossibilities. It unfortunately does nothing of the kind. Most technical training and the average of that which we call experience, provide a record of previous failures and, instead of these failures being taken for what they are worth, they are taken as absolute bars to progress. If some man, calling himself an authority, says that this or that cannot be done, then a horde of unthinking followers start the chorus: "It can't be done."

Take castings. Casting has always been a wasteful process, and is so old that it has accumulated many traditions which make improvements extraordinarily difficult to bring about. I believe one authority on molding declared — before we started our experiments — that any man who said he could reduce costs within half a year wrote himself down as a fraud.

Our foundry used to be much like other foundries. When we cast the first "Model T" cylinders in 1910, everything in the place was done by hand; shovels and wheelbarrows abounded. The work was then either skilled or unskilled; we had molders and we had laborers. Now we have about five per cent of thoroughly skilled molders and core setters, but the remaining ninety-five per cent are unskilled; or, to put it more accurately, must be skilled in exactly one operation, which the most stupid man can learn within two days. The molding is all done by machinery. Each part which we have to cast has a unit or units of its own — according to the number required in the plan of production. The machinery of the unit is adapted to the single casting; thus the men in the unit each perform a single operation that is always the same. A unit consists of an overhead railway to which at intervals are hung little platforms for the molds. Without going into technical details, let me say the making of the molds and the cores, and the packing of the cores, are done with the work in motion on the platforms. The metal is poured at another point as the work moves and, by the time the mold in which the metal has been poured reaches the terminal, it is cool enough to start on its automatic way to cleaning, machining, and assembling. And the platform is moving around for a new load.

Take the development of the piston rod assembly. Even under the old plan, this operation took only three minutes and did not seem to be one to bother about. There were two benches and twenty-eight men in all; they assembled one hundred seventy-five pistons and rods in a nine-hour day — which means just five seconds over three minutes each. There was no inspection and many of the piston and rod assemblies came back from the motor assembling line as defective. It is a very simple operation. The workman pushed the pin out of the piston, oiled the pin, slipped the rod in place, put the pin through the rod and piston, tightened one screw and opened another screw. That was the whole operation. The foreman, examining the operation, could not discover why it should take as much as three minutes. He analyzed the motions with a stop-watch. He found that four hours out of a nine-hour day were spent in walking. The assembler did not go off anywhere, but he had to shift his feet to gather in his materials and to push away his finished piece. In the whole task, each man performed six operations. The foreman devised a new plan; he split the operation into three divisions, put a slide on the bench and three men on each side of it, and an inspector at the end. Instead of one man performing the whole operation, one man then performed only one-third of the operation — he performed only as much as he could do without shifting his feet. They cut down the squad from twenty-eight to fourteen men. The former record for twenty-eight men was one hundred seventy-five assemblies a day. Now seven men turn out twenty-six hundred assemblies in eight hours. It is not necessary to calculate the savings there!

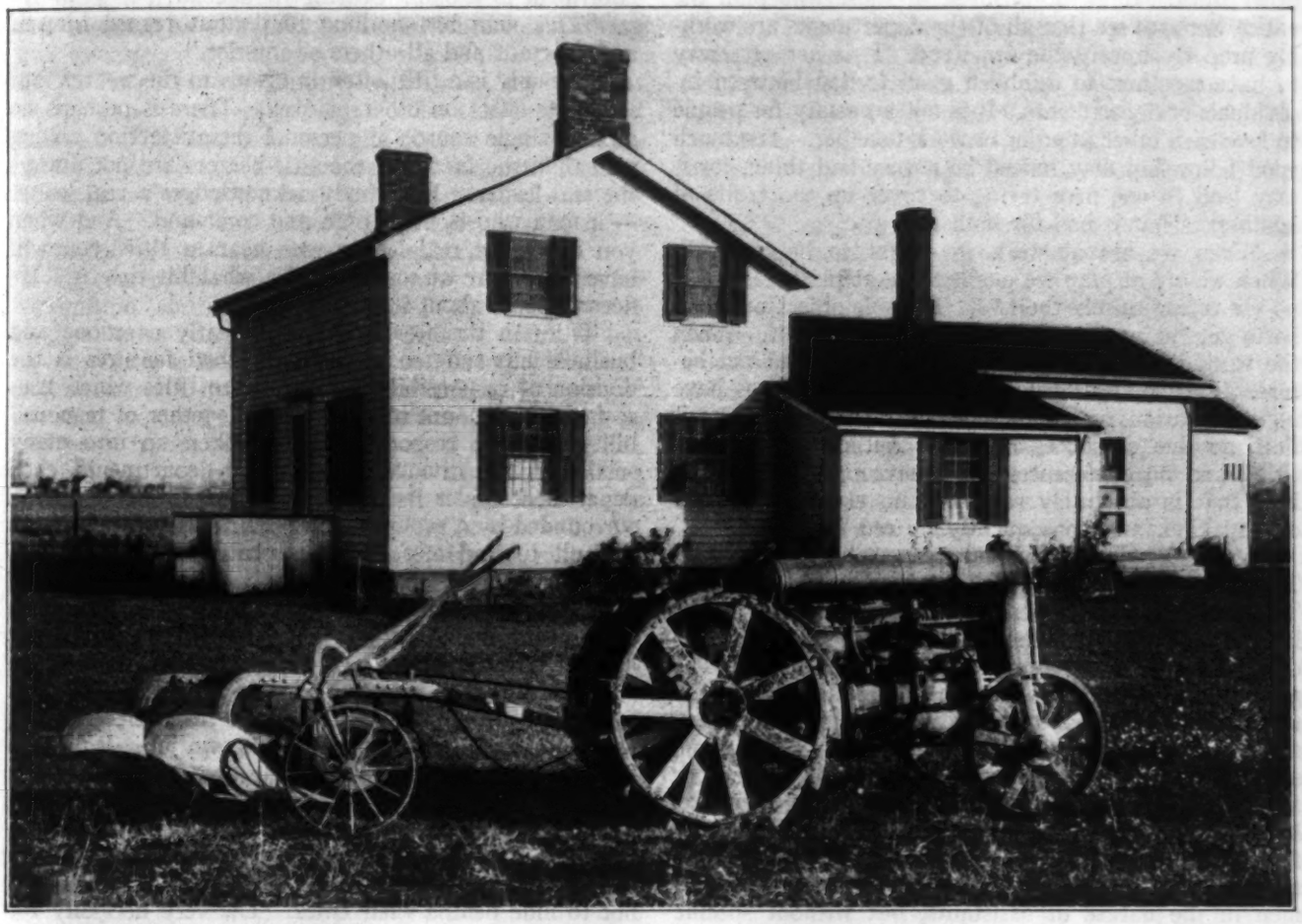
Painting the rear axle assembly once gave some trouble. It used to be dipped by hand into a tank of enamel. This required several handlings and the services of two men. Now one man takes care of it all on a special machine, designed and built in the factory. The man now merely hangs the assembly on a moving chain which carries it up over the enamel tank, two levers then thrust thimbles over the ends of the ladle shaft, the paint tank rises six feet, immerses the axle, returns to position and the axle goes on to the drying oven. The whole cycle of operations now takes just thirteen seconds.

The radiator is a somewhat complex affair and soldering it used to be a matter of skill. There are ninety-five tubes in a radiator. Fitting and soldering these tubes in place is by hand a long operation, requiring both skill and patience. Now it is all done by a machine which will make twelve hundred radiator cores in eight hours; then they are soldered in place by being carried through a furnace by a conveyor. No tinsmith work and so no skill is required.

We used to rivet the crank-case arms to the crank-case, using pneumatic hammers which were supposed to be the latest development. It took six men to hold the hammers and six men to hold the casings, and the din was terrific. Now an automatic press operated by one man, who does nothing else, gets through five times as much work in a day as those twelve men did.

In the Piquette plant the cylinder casting traveled four thousand feet in the course of finishing; now it travels only slightly over three hundred feet.

There is no manual handling of material. There is not a single hand operation. If a machine can be made automatic, it is made automatic. Not a single operation is ever considered as being done in the best or cheapest way. At that, only about ten per cent of our tools are special; the others are regular machines adjusted to the particular job. And they are placed almost side by



*The house in which Henry Ford was born at Greenfield, Mich., July 30, 1863, as it is to-day; a Fordson tractor in the foreground*

side. We put more machinery per square foot of floor space than any factory in the world — every foot of space not used carries an overhead expense. We want none of that waste. Yet there is all the room needed — no man has too much room and no man has too little room.

Dividing and subdividing operations, keeping the work in motion — those are the keynotes of production. But also it is to be remembered that all the parts are designed so that they can be most easily made. And the saving? Although the comparison is not quite fair, it is startling.

If, at our present rate of production, we employed the same number of men per car that we did when we began in 1903 — and those men were only for assembly — we should to-day require a force of more than two hundred thousand.

We have less than fifty thousand men on automobile production at our highest point of around four thousand cars a day!

## CHAPTER VII.

### Machines and Men

That which one has to fight hardest against, in bringing together a large number of people to do work, is excess organization and consequent red tape.

To my mind there is no bent of mind more dangerous than that which is sometimes described as the "genius for organization." This usually results in the birth of a great big chart, showing, after the fashion of a family tree, how authority ramifies. The tree is heavy with nice round berries, each of which bears the name of a man or of an office.

Every man has a title and certain duties which are strictly limited by the circumference of his berry.

If a straw boss wants to say something to the general superintendent, his message has to go through the sub-foreman, the foreman, the department head, and all the assistant superintendents, before, in the course of time, it reaches the general superintendent. Probably by that time what he wanted to talk about is already history.

It takes about six weeks for the message of a man living in a berry on the lower left hand corner of the chart to reach the president or chairman of the board, and, if it ever does reach one of these august officials, it has by that time gathered to itself about a pound of criticisms, suggestions, and comments.

Very few things are ever taken under "official consideration" until long after the time when they actually ought to have been done. The buck is passed to and fro and all responsibility is dodged by individuals — following the lazy notion that two heads are better than one.

Now a business, in my way of thinking, is not a machine. It is a collection of people who are brought together to do work and not to write letters to one another.

It is not necessary for any one department to know what any other department is doing. If a man is

doing his work he will not have time to take up any other work. It is the business of those who plan the entire work, to see that all of the departments are working properly toward the same end. It is not necessary to have meetings to establish good feeling between individuals or departments. It is not necessary for people to love each other in order to work together. Too much good fellowship may indeed be a very bad thing, for it may lead to one man trying to cover up the faults of another. That is bad for both men.

When we are at work we ought to be at work. When we are at play we ought to be at play. There is no use trying to mix the two. The sole object ought to be to get the work done and to get paid for it. When the work is done then the play can come, but not before. And so the Ford factories and enterprises have no organization, no specific duties attaching to any position, no line of succession or of authority, very few titles, and no conferences. We have only the clerical help that is absolutely required; no elaborate records of any kind, and consequently no red tape.

We make the individual responsibility complete. The workman is absolutely responsible for his work. The straw boss is responsible for the workmen under him. The foreman is responsible for his group. The department head is responsible for the department. The general superintendent is responsible for the whole factory. Every man has to know what is going on in his sphere. I say "general superintendent." There is no such formal title. One man is in charge of the factory and has been for many years. He has two men with him, who, without in any way having their duties defined, have taken particular sections of the work to themselves. With them are about half a dozen other men in the nature of assistants, but without specific duties. They have all made jobs for themselves — but there are no limits to their jobs. They just work in where they best fit. One man chases stock and shortages. Another has grabbed inspection, and so on.

This may seem haphazard, but it is not. A group of men, wholly intent upon getting work done, have no difficulty in seeing that the work is done. They do not get into trouble about the limits of authority, because they are not thinking of titles. If they had offices and all that, they would shortly be giving up their time to office work and to wondering why they did not have a better office than some other fellow.

### The Real Leader Needs No Title

BECAUSE there are no titles and no limits of authority, there is no question of red tape or of going over a man's head. Any workman can go to anybody, and so established has become this custom, that a foreman does not get sore if a workman goes over him and directly to the head of the factory. The workman rarely ever does so, because a foreman knows as well as he knows his own name that, if he has been unjust it will very quickly be found out, and he will no longer be a foreman. One of the things that we will not tolerate is injustice of any kind. The moment a man starts to swell with authority, he is discovered, and he goes out, or goes back to a machine. A large amount of labor unrest comes from the unjust exercise of authority by those in subordinate positions and I am afraid that in far too many manufacturing institutions it is really not possible for a workman to get a square deal.

The work and the work alone controls us. That is one of the reasons why we have no titles. Most men can swing a job, but they are floored by a title. The effect of a title is very peculiar. It has been used too much as a sign of emancipation from work. It is almost equivalent to a badge bearing the legend:

"This man has nothing to do but regard himself as important and all others as inferior."

Not only is a title often injurious to the wearer, but it has its effect on others as well. There is perhaps no greater single source of personal dissatisfaction among men than the fact that the title-bearers are not always the real leaders. Everybody acknowledges a real leader — a man who is fit to plan and command. And when you do find a real leader who bears a title, you will have to inquire of some one else what his title is. He doesn't boast about it.

Titles in business have been greatly overdone and business has suffered. One of the bad features is the division of responsibility according to titles which goes so far as to amount to a removal altogether of responsibility. Where responsibility is broken up into many small bits and divided among many departments, each department under its own titular head, who in turn is surrounded by a group bearing their nice sub-titles, it is difficult to find any one who really feels responsible. Every one knows what "passing the buck" means. The game must have originated in industrial organizations where the departments simply shove responsibility along. The health of every organization depends on every member — whatever his place — feeling that everything that happens to come to his notice relating to the welfare of the business is his own job. Railroads have gone to the devil under the eyes of departments that say:

"Oh, that doesn't come under our department. Department X, 100 miles away, has that in charge."

There used to be a lot of advice given to officials not to hide behind their titles. The very necessity for the advice showed a condition that needed more than advice to correct it. And the correction is just this — abolish the titles. A few may be legally necessary; a few may be useful in directing the public how to do business with the concern, but for the rest the best rule is simple: "Get rid of them."

As a matter of fact, the record of business in general just now is such as to detract very much from the value of titles. No one would boast of being president of a bankrupt bank. Business on the whole has not been so skillfully steered as to leave much margin for pride in the steersmen. The men who bear titles now and are worth anything are forgetting their titles and are down in the foundation of business looking for the weak spots. They are back again in the places from which they rose — trying to reconstruct from the bottom up. And when a man is really at work, he needs no title. His work honors him.

All of our people come into the factory or the offices through the employment departments. As I have said, we do not hire experts — neither do we hire men on past experiences nor for any position other than the lowest. Since we do not take a man on his past history, we do not refuse him because of his past history. I never met a man who was thoroughly bad. There is always some good — if he gets a chance. That is the reason we do not care in the least about a man's antecedents — we do not hire a man's history, we hire the man. If he has been in jail, that is no reason to say that he will be in jail again. I think, on the contrary, he is, if given a chance, very likely to make a special effort to keep out of jail. Our employment office does not bar a man for anything he has previously done — he is equally acceptable whether he has been in Sing Sing or Harvard, and we do not even inquire from which

place he has graduated. All that he needs is the desire to work. If he does not desire to work, it is very unlikely that he will apply for a position, for it is pretty well understood that a man in the Ford plant works.

We do not, to repeat, care what a man has been. If he has gone to college he ought to be able to go ahead faster, but he has to start at the bottom and prove his ability. Every man's future rests solely with himself. There is far too much loose talk about men being unable to obtain recognition. With us every man is fairly certain to get the exact recognition he deserves.

Of course, there are certain factors in the desire for recognition which must be reckoned with. The whole modern industrial system has warped the desire so out of shape that it is now almost an obsession. There was a time when a man's personal advancement depended entirely and immediately upon his work, and not upon any one's favor; but nowadays it often depends far too much upon the individual's good fortune in catching some influential eye. That is what we have successfully fought against. Men will work with the idea of catching somebody's eye; they will work with the idea that, unless they get credit for what they have done, they might as well do it badly or even not at all. Thus the work sometimes becomes a secondary consideration. The job in hand — the article in hand, the special kind of service in hand — turns out to be not the principal job. The main work becomes personal advancement — a platform from which to catch somebody's eye. This habit of making the work secondary and the recognition primary, is unfair to the work. It makes recognition and credit the real job. And this also has an unfortunate effect on the worker. It encourages a peculiar kind of ambition which is neither lovely nor productive. It produces the kind of man who imagines that by "standing in with the boss" he will get ahead. Every shop knows this kind of man. And the worst of it is there are some things in the present industrial system which make it appear that the game really pays. Foremen are only human. It is natural that they should be flattered by being made to believe that they hold the weal or woe of workmen in their hands. It is natural also, that being open to flattery, their self-seeking subordinates should flatter them still more to obtain and profit by their favor. That is why I want as little as possible of the personal element.

It is particularly easy for any man who never knows it all to go forward to a higher position with us. Some men will work hard, but they do not possess the capacity to think and especially to think quickly. Such men get as far as their ability deserves. A man may, by his industry, deserve advancement, but it cannot possibly be given him unless he also has a certain element of leadership. This is not a dream world we are living in. I think that every man in the shaking down process of our factory eventually lands about where he belongs.

We are never satisfied with the way that anything is done in any part of the organization; we always think it ought to be done better and that eventually it will be done better. This spirit of crowding forces forward the man who has the qualities for a higher place. He perhaps would not get the place if at any time the organization — which is a word I do not like to use — became fixed, so that there would be routine steps and dead men's shoes. But we have so few titles that a man who ought to be doing something better than he is doing, very soon gets to doing it — he is not restrained by the fact that there is no position ahead of him "open" — for there are no "positions." We have no cut and dried places — our best men make their places. This is easy enough to do, for there is always work, and when all think of getting the work done instead of finding a title to fit a man who wants to be promoted, then there is no difficulty about promotion. The promotion itself is not formal; the man simply finds himself doing something other than what he was doing and getting more money.

All of our people have thus come up from the bottom. The head of the factory started as a machinist. The man in charge of the big River Rouge plant began as a pattern maker. Another man overseeing one of the principal departments started as a sweeper. There is not a single man anywhere in the factory who did not simply come in off the street. Everything that we have developed has been by men who have qualified themselves with us. We fortunately did not inherit any traditions and we are not founding any. If we have a tradition it is this:

Everything can always be done better than it is being done.

That pressing always to do work better and faster solves nearly every factory problem. A department gets its standing on its rate of production. The rate of production and the cost of production are distinct elements. The foremen and superintendents would only be wasting time, were they to keep a check on the costs in their departments. There are certain costs — such as the rate of wages, the overhead, the price of materials and the like — which they could not in any way control, so they do not bother about them. What they can control is the rate of production in their own departments. The rating of a department is gained by dividing the number of parts produced by the number of hours of work. Every foreman checks his own department daily — he carries the figures always with him. The superintendent has a tabulation of all the scores; if there is something wrong in a department the output score shows it at once, the superintendent makes inquiries and the foreman looks alive. A considerable part of the incentive to better methods is directly traceable to this simple rule-of-thumb method of rating production. The foreman need not be a cost accountant — he is no better a foreman for being one. His charges are the machines and the human beings in his department. When they are working at their best he has performed his service. The rate of his production is his guide. There is no reason for him to scatter his energies over collateral subjects.

This rating system simply forces a foreman to forget personalities — to forget everything other than the work in hand. If he should select the people he likes instead of the people who can best do the work, his department record will quickly show up that fact. It is to his personal advantage always to be shoving up the best men; for thereby he shoves himself up.

### What Men Want Most

THERE is no difficulty in picking out men. They pick themselves out because — although one hears a great deal about the lack of opportunity for advancement — the average workman is more interested in a steady job than he is in advancement. Scarcely more than five per cent of those who work for wages, while they have the desire to receive more money, have also the willingness to accept the additional responsibility and the additional work which goes with the higher place. Only about twenty-five per cent are even willing to be straw bosses and most of them take that position

because it carries with it more pay than working on a machine. Men of a more mechanical turn of mind, but with no desire for responsibility, go into the tool making departments, where they receive considerably more pay than in production proper. But the vast majority of men want to stay put. They want to be led. They want to have everything done for them and to have no responsibility. Therefore in spite of the great mass of men, the difficulty is not to discover men to advance, but men who are willing to be advanced.

The accepted theory is that all people are anxious for advancement and a great many pretty plans have been built up on that. I can only say that we do not find that to be the case. The Americans in our employ do want to go ahead, but by no means do they always want to go clear through to the top. The foreigners, generally speaking, are content to stay as straw bosses. Why all of this is, I do not know. I am giving the facts.

As I have said, everyone in the place preserves an open mind as to the way in which every job is being done. If there is any fixed theory — any fixed rule — it is that no job is being done well enough. The whole factory management is always open to suggestion and we have an informal suggestion system by which any workman can communicate any idea that comes to him and get action on it. The saving of a cent per piece may be distinctly worth while. A saving of one cent on a car at our present rate of production represents twelve thousand dollars a year. One cent saved on each part would amount to millions a year. Therefore in comparing savings, the calculations are carried out to the thousandth part of a cent. If a new way suggested shows a saving and the cost of making the change will pay for itself within a reasonable time — say within three months — the change is made practically as of course. These changes are by no means limited to improvements which will increase production or decrease cost. A great many — perhaps most of them — are in the line of making the work easier and safer. We do not want any hard, man-killing work about the place and there is now very little of it. Usually, it happens, that adopting the way which is easier on the men, also decreases the cost. There is most intimate connection between decency and good business. We also investigate down to the last decimal whether it is cheaper to make or to buy a part.

The suggestions come from everywhere. The Polish workmen seem to be the cleverest of all of the foreigners in making them. One, who could not speak English, indicated that if the tool in his machine were set at a different angle it might wear longer. As it was it lasted only four or five cuts. He was right and a lot of money was saved in grinding. Another Pole, running a drill press, rigged up a little fixture to save handling the part after drilling. That was adopted generally and a considerable saving resulted. The men often try out little attachments of their own because, concentrating on one thing, they can, if they have a mind that way, usually devise some improvement. The cleanliness of a man's machine — although cleaning a machine is no part of his duty — is also usually an indication of his intelligence.

Here are some of the suggestions. A proposal that castings be taken from the foundry to the machine shop on an overhead conveyor saved seventy men in the transport division. There used to be seventeen men — and this was when production was smaller — taking the burrs off gears and it was a hard, nasty job. A man roughly sketched a special machine. His idea was worked out and the machine built. Now four men have several times the output of the seventeen men — and have no hard work at all to do. Changing from a solid to a welded rod in one part of the chassis effected an immediate saving of about one-half million a year, on a smaller than the present day production. Making certain tubes out of flat sheets instead of drawing them in the usual way effected another enormous saving.

The old method of making a certain gear comprised four operations and twelve per cent of the steel went into scrap. We use most of our scrap and eventually we will use it all, but that is no reason for not cutting down on scrap — the mere fact that all waste is not a dead loss is no excuse for permitting waste. One of the workmen devised a very simple new method for making this gear in which the scrap was only one per cent.

The cam shaft has to have heat treatment in order to make the surface hard; the cam shafts always came out of the heat-treat oven somewhat warped, and even back in 1918, we employed 37 men just to straighten the shafts. Several of our men experimented for about a year and finally worked out a new form of oven in which the shafts could not warp. In 1921, with the production much larger than in 1918, we employed only eight men in the whole operation.

And then there is the pressing to take away the necessity for skill in any job. The old-time tool hardener was an expert. He had to judge the heating temperatures. It was a hit or miss operation. The wonder is that he hit so often. The heat treatment in the hardening of steel is highly important — provided one knows exactly the right heat to apply. That cannot be known by rule-of-thumb. It has to be measured. We introduced a system by which the man at the furnace has nothing at all to do with the heat. He does not see the pyrometer — the instrument which registers the temperature. Colored electric lights give him his signals.

None of our machines is ever built haphazardly. The idea is investigated in detail before a move is made. Sometimes wooden models are constructed or again the parts are drawn to full size on a blackboard. We are not bound by precedent, but we leave nothing to luck, and we have yet to build a machine that did not do the work for which it was designed. About ninety per cent of all our experiments have been successful.

Whatever expertness in fabrication which has developed has been due to men. I think that if men are unhampered and they know that they are serving, they will always put all of mind and will into even the most trivial of tasks.

# The Fog

By Esther Clark Hill

The gray world, the gray world,
That clouds the face of Spring;
That clothes in nebulous white shrouds
Each near familiar thing —
Even the river's voice sounds strange,
Sullenly murmuring.

No warm light finds the gray world
Of filmy veils and spray;
The clinging beauty of the fog
Has shut the hills away;
God's living sun has died and left
This lovely wraith of Day!

The gray world, the ghost world —
The winds lie where they list
While Spring comes shyly veiled in gray
To keep her April tryst.
*O you who died before this day,*
*What loveliness you missed!*

—From *"The Lyric West"*

# The Wanderer's Soul

By Anita Fitch

O why should I weep because men weep!
For me fierce winds are singing;
And past the mists and the veils of rain
A blythesome Soul I'm winging.

And past the moon with her pool of dreams
And her ruined hills forlorn,
I seek the tale she has long forgot . . .
And I hear Orion's horn.

Orion hunts with the laughing Dead,
And, down the thundering skies,
They point my little grave to me
Where wet in the field it lies.

# Don Cristobal de Zaurigi

*The Romantic Adventures of a Gentleman of Spain*

By Ernest Goodwin — Illustrated by Bert Salg

## CHAPTER I

### DON CRISTOBAL IMPRISONED IN THE TOWER

"FROM this day forward," said Don Cristobal, solemnly, "I swear never to do a hand's turn for a soul in this world, except myself."

"That is your fixed resolution?" asked the old gentleman.

"Fixed and unchangeable," replied Cristobal firmly. "To be generous is to be a fool. Henceforward the interests of Cristobal de Zaurigi shall be Cristobal de Zaurigi's one concern."

"For a generous spirit to turn mean," smiled the old gentleman, "is one of the easiest things in the world."

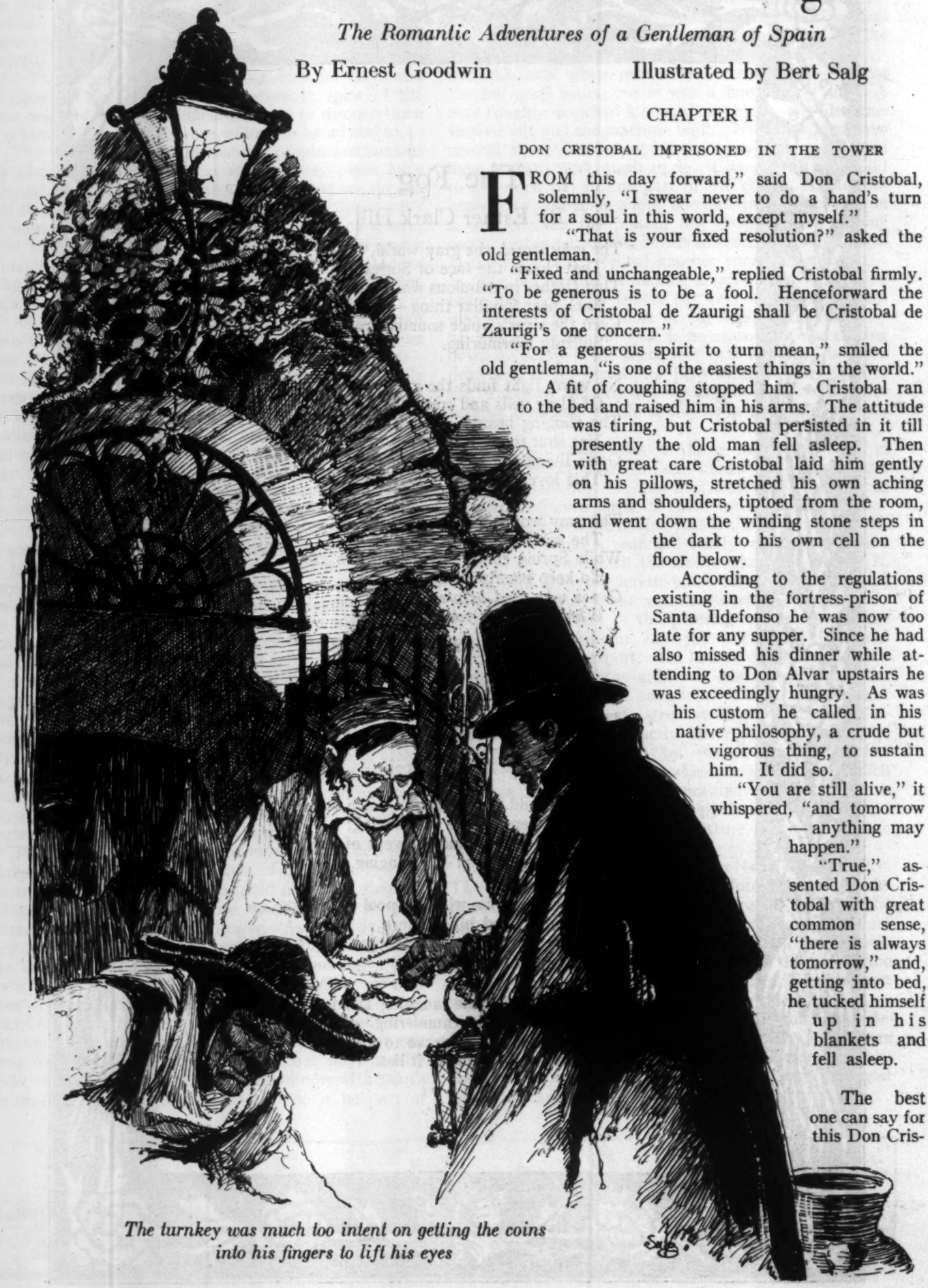
A fit of coughing stopped him. Cristobal ran to the bed and raised him in his arms. The attitude was tiring, but Cristobal persisted in it till presently the old man fell asleep. Then with great care Cristobal laid him gently on his pillows, stretched his own aching arms and shoulders, tiptoed from the room, and went down the winding stone steps in the dark to his own cell on the floor below.

According to the regulations existing in the fortress-prison of Santa Ildefonso he was now too late for any supper. Since he had also missed his dinner while attending to Don Alvar upstairs he was exceedingly hungry. As was his custom he called in his native philosophy, a crude but vigorous thing, to sustain him. It did so.

"You are still alive," it whispered, "and tomorrow — anything may happen."

"True," assented Don Cristobal with great common sense, "there is always tomorrow," and, getting into bed, he tucked himself up in his blankets and fell asleep.

The best one can say for this Don Cris-



*The turnkey was much too intent on getting the coins into his fingers to lift his eyes*

tobal de Zaurigi is that he had a certain genius for fidelity. In friendship, in love, in fighting, he had been fairly well tested, and this characteristic had been noticeable. Since it is none too common let it go to his credit.

He was impulsive, unwisely but not meanly. He was self-indulgent, permitting himself such expensive indiscretions as friendship with poor men, enthusiasms for shaky causes, indignations at injustices, and other quixotic and high-flown notions. In five years at court he had failed to learn that prince of mottoes for courtiers great and small. "Each for Himself, and Devil take the Hindmost."

No wonder then that, having arrived at Seville, where for some years the Spanish court had been in residence, on his twentieth birthday, with a deft sword and a fluent tongue, a name he was proud of, a slender purse and no influence to speak of, he was still no nearer the fortune he aimed at than when he started.

A couple of campaigns in the Low Countries, a passage or two of arms with young men of his own kidney, more encounters of another sort with another sex, than possibly were good for him, had licked him into shape. But his back was still too stiff, his eye too bold; his shoulders were too clumsy when he attempted — as once or twice he was persuaded to do — to bring them to the proper rounded bend before a great man. In fact, if Don Cristobal was in prison, the shrewd will see that he deserved no less.

Santa Ildefonso, now no more, stood half-way between the royal palace and the Puerta Del Torre d'Oro at Seville. It was reserved for gentlemen offenders actually attached to the Palace at the time of arrest. As a rule their detention was no long matter, but Cristobal had learned with a shudder soon after his arrival there, that there was apparently such a thing as being forgotten altogether.

He had allowed the tears of the amiable (and pretty) Dona Agnez de Ramirez to enlist his help in a matter best left alone. It concerned her husband. It concerned a lady of high position and red hair, and it concerned the red-haired lady's husband. A wise man would have shunned the whole business like the plague. But there you have your Cristobal. Here was danger and no possible profit—so in he went with a light heart and the high purpose of a paladin.

"DEAR lady," said Don Cristobal, kissing her hand respectfully (he might have ventured higher without rebuke), "you may command me. In this affair we must be discreet, cautious, secret."

"Discreet, cautious, secret. Good. I rely on you," said Dona Agnez, and Cristobal sat down to think out a scheme which should be discreet, cautious and secret.

He devised a comedy, or, if you like, a drama — it proved a tragedy for Cristobal — to be played in a pavilion in the Palace gardens at midnight. It involved concocted messages, fabricated letters, dispatches by untrustworthy messengers, the enlisting of confidants bound by pledges of secrecy no sane person would dream of relying on. It brought a number of people, some expectant, some indignant, to the pavilion in the dark, it caused a scandal of the first water, a fight, a riot up to the doors of the very palace — in short, it was a brilliant success from several points of view.

But where were the caution, the secrecy, the discretion? All the messengers confessed (as might have been expected). All the confidants divulged everything (as was certain). Everybody else in the affair who saw the remotest chance of being discovered promptly threw all the blame on Don Cristobal (not unreasonably), and the upshot was that within twelve hours or so he was regarding his prospects from the cloistered seclusion of a cell in one of the tall towers of Santa Ildefonso.

At the worst the evening had not been dull, and for a day or two Cristobal found sufficient amusement in recalling the events of that crowded hour. But time and use take the edge from the best of jokes. Cristobal determined not to work the humor of the affair too persistently. It was likely, he saw, to be his only source of laughter for some time to come.

Things might have been worse. He had certain freedoms. He was allowed to purchase small comforts, pay occasional visits to other prisoners — to those in the tower in which he was confined almost without restriction — provided he was in his room by a certain hour at night. He made one positive gain — he discovered the value of the usual protestation of friendship.

HE wrote letters to people he had deemed amiably interested in him, begging their intercession. As far as he could discover no one did anything at all for him.

He fell into a rage. He unbosomed himself to Don Alvar de Fabricio, who occupied the cell above his own.

"These people," he said, hotly, "at whose service I held my purse — not worth much I confess — and my sword — worth more than a little I imagine — will not lift a finger to help me in the hour of my distress."

"Unheard of!" said Don Alvar, gravely. He was old. He had been in the prison six years and was plainly dying by inches.

It was in March that Cristobal was conducted, laughing, to prison.

In April he still laughed.

In May he was bored.

In June he was anxious.

In July he was desperate.

In August he was frantic.

In September he was free!

During the early days of that month he set himself to think things over calmly.

"Friend Cristobal," he said, "they will never let you out of this prison. Very well, it remains to escape. How?

"This infernal hole is but a quarter of a mile from the Puerto del Torre d'Oro. It may as well be ten leagues, however, if I do not get out of this place.

"How is it to be done?"

He reflected for some time. "A way does not occur to me at the moment, but, since this first step is imperative, let us assume then an idea will in due time present itself. Well, then, there we are, neatly outside the prison.

"Now, how do we pass the gate of the city?"

He gave this matter also profound thought for a time, then, "Here, too," he confessed, "a plan does not immediately shape itself. But since it must, why, it will. Heigho," he smiled, "we are getting on famously. A bare ten minutes' reflection, and here we are, already free of both the prison and the city. What next? Money, a horse, and a sword, and, these secured," (already in his mind he had secured all three), "what then? Ah!" — he fell into a melancholy. He saw that if Spain were not already too hot to hold him, it most decidedly would be when once he broke prison.

"No matter," he went on. "If for me Spain must exist no longer, there is France. There is even England." He shuddered, but, "Courage, Cristobal!" he finished — with a sigh, for Spain was his native land and dear to him.

Falling into a day-dream he saw himself pacing the free highway mounted on a fine horse, with a blade of true steel by his side and a bag of coins at his belt. The picture was so pleasant that he flung back his head proudly. Since as a matter of fact he was seated astride a chair which he had balanced on its two hind legs, this action unfortunately brought him over backwards with a crash on the floor, his head striking the stone wall of his room. For some seconds he remained almost stunned, then rubbing his head ruefully he brought his thoughts back to the exigencies of his present situation.

For some weeks Cristobal — that cynic, determined never to do a hand's turn for anyone — had been waiting with anxious solicitude, day and night, on Don Alvar in the room above. The old gentleman was poor and apparently friendless. Cristobal depleted his own slender purse in the effort to get him a little comfort as he saw him taking a decided turn for the worse.

He called in a doctor, who pronounced the case one of uncertainty. This was a state of affairs he soon remedied. Two days' liberal bleeding so far triumphed over the painful doubt he had first expressed as to enable him to prophesy with confidence his patient's speedy end.

His sagacity and his doctoring were justified.

The prisoner died in the early hours of the September morning.

Some hours later Cristobal encountered the governor of the prison in the dead man's cell, and learnt from him what arrangements had been made for the disposal of the body. Permission had been granted for its removal that night to the family seat of the Fabricio family some leagues outside Seville along the road to Cortegas. Cristobal, contemplating in his own cell this melancholy escape to freedom, found himself busy with a wild notion of obtaining his own liberty at the same time. A scheme began to shape itself within his laboring brain. Rapidly he turned and twisted it about. It grew — it crystallized.

When Don Alvar's body made its exit through the outer gates of Santa Ildefonso Cristobal must accompany it. How simple, how straightforward it seemed. Could it be carried out? A long pause, then,

"I refuse to allow it to fail," said Cristobal. "I will compel success. I will escape!"

## CHAPTER II

### INTRODUCES THE VILLIAN

Cristobal was not the only scion of the house of Zaurigi Seville could boast at this time.

He had a cousin, Escotillo de Zaurigi, between whom and himself an ample dislike existed.

Escotillo, six years older than Cristobal, had welcomed his cousin to Seville, helped him into various follies, borrowed what he could of his meagre stock of coins, companioned him assiduously while the rest lasted and then definitely turned his back upon him.

Each now disliked and avoided the other, but an occasional encounter took place. One of these led to high words, a quarrel, a drawing of blades, and, on these being suppressed, a formal meeting early one morning. Escotillo, a man of known ability as a swordsman, discovered in one minute that he had met his match, in two, his master, in three, a conqueror, who — bitter and unforgivable — spared him generously. For this did Escotillo cherish for Cristobal a savage contempt and an undying hate.

Poor, like Cristobal, Escotillo was put to shifts to get a living. At Cristobal's schemes one might laugh; there was usually a joke at the tail end of them. Escotillo's stratagems when hard driven were best not discussed. They usually faded away into a plausible explanation.

He was far the better-looking of the two, and had a turn for the arts. He was a poet and this, allied with the eloquent tongue all the Zaurigis possessed, brought him his successes. He was more often a favorite with rich women than with rich women's husbands.

*The coffin-bearers came with difficulty down the winding stairway*

ONE evening in September, the month that saw the end of Cristobal's endurance in his cell in Santa Ildefonso, Escotillo betook himself, in obedience to a summons he was too wise to disobey, to a certain room in Seville, whose whereabouts need not be disclosed, where he was received in audience by a man whose identity may for the present remain secret.

He received the curtest of greetings, was told to sit, and did so. His interviewer looked him over silently for some seconds, then began.

"You know Tormeso?"

"The man?"

"The city."

"I know of it. I have never been there."

"Past Tormeso, some leagues, lies Guipuscadilla. You will not know that."

Escotillo sat attentive.

"Can you go there?"

"Yes." Escotillo knew what was expected of him. One did not refuse — unless one was a hare-brain like, say, his cousin Cristobal — the requests of the man addressing him.

This man looked him over again and went on more slowly. Plainly he was picking his words.

"A man I know has his country seat there."

"Yes?"

"Don Diego de la Llana."

Escotillo nodded. Don Diego de la Llana was disgraced and excluded from the court this last five years. The man who spoke to Escotillo had brought that about. All Seville knew it.

"He has a daughter, now eighteen. He has brought her up and keeps her still in seclusion at his house at Guipuscadilla.

Escotillo nodded again.

"I wish to have that girl under my hand."

"Why?" asked Escotillo, and knew instantly that he had blundered. A malevolent glance stabbed at him. He flushed and gabbled out a hasty disclaimer of curiosity.

"No — after all, why should I ask?" he laughed. "It is no business of mine. You will no doubt tell me all there is to know."

A leisurely contempt swept him, then his instruction was resumed.

"For my own reasons I wish to secure the girl's person. There are difficulties."

Escotillo, more wise, waited in silence.

"The girl lives at Guipuscadilla. Don Diego spends six months there, six months here in Seville, each year, endeavouring to secure a return of the king's favour. The girl is now, and has always been, well guarded. The house is strong, the grounds are walled. She never goes out of them. The men servants, in the house and about the grounds, are numerous."

"You think then of force?" asked Escotillo.

An impatient sneer. "I think of anything else but force. Do you think that I can be concerned, however secretly, in an attempt with a regiment of men on a Spanish nobleman's house and the abduction of his daughter? Where are your wits? There is a fight. A man, five men, twenty men, are wounded, left behind, taken, questioned — Bah! No. I have a plan, far better."

This time Escotillo waited patiently.

"TO get a girl away from her father's house, no need to drag her against her will. She is to be lured. Once set her heart on escape and trust her wits to find the way out."

Escotillo looked approval.

"If you went to Guipuscadilla, if, by hook or by crook, you got speech with the girl — "

A pause. "It could be done," said Escotillo.

"She knows nothing of the world — a complete innocent, of that I am assured. Further, her companion, her governess and duenna, died recently. Another has been appointed."

The eyes fixed on Escotillo's held him silent during the ensuing pause.

"This new governess is — my creature . . . . When you seek an interview with the girl, it will not be so difficult as it might have been six weeks ago. . . . If the girl fell in love with you — you know all the tricks — "

Escotillo laughed.

"Leave it to her to find a way to you, somehow. Now, listen." He gave a glance round the room, then leaning his lips to Escotillo's ear spoke in a lower voice. "You see her secretly, that much shall be arranged. You charm her, lure her away from her father's house. You take every precaution against being intercepted. You arrange to meet her, not near the house, but at some place which later I will tell you of — "

"Yes?"

"That is all."

"You mean — "

"I mean, you leave her there."

"I leave her there?"

"You leave her. Understand me, no harm to her. Only she is to be beguiled to the place I speak of and once there, left for me to dispose of. I have my plans. . . . Well?"

Escotillo de Zaurigi took a little time to consider.

Deeply as he had been forced at times to dive into the depths of intrigue when urged by that prince of devils, an empty purse, this was something more than he cared to contemplate. But if an instinct of refusal stirred in him, two other motives, both powerful, pressed him to comply.

ONE was that same devil, pennilessness. His purse was empty, and numerous small debts were nagging at his heels. The other was fear to refuse the man addressing him.

He was notorious for the range of his malice. He accepted enmity as eagerly as other men welcomed friendship, and was known for the scrupulous exactitude with which he would take his revenge equally on a man of high rank or on some humble nonentity. Escotillo knew that to refuse what he was asked after listening to so much would be to provoke a hostility unresting and unforgetting. He saw there was but one course open to him — acceptance, and make the best bargain he could.

"I must be paid well," he blurted.

A nod.

"Very well then. . . . I know nothing of what you want with the girl. . . . At the most I may take it that — that — you intend playing some harmless piece of annoyance on Don Diego de Llana."

"You may conclude what you like. All I want of you is that you get the girl to the place I shall select and there leave her to my dealing."

"There is one more thing," said Escotillo. "Supposing there is trouble — discovery — am I to look to you for protection?"

"No. I shall deny everything," came the calm reply. "It is for you to take your risks — and your precautions."

Precautions — Escotillo thought hard as he nodded slowly. He felt more and more certainly that on his shoulders was being thrust all the worst of a perilous enterprise, involving him quite possibly in terrible consequences. His mind worked rapidly.

"I have a plan," he said, "which you had better know. I have no mind to be dragged into trouble if I can avoid it. My cousin, Cristobal — "

"Yes? He is in Santa Ildefonso, is he not?"

"Yes. Can you tell me how long he will stay there?"

A shrug of the shoulders. "As long as you like. . . . He need never come out at all if necessary."

"I shall take his name."

The other lifted his eyebrows.

"I shall take his name," repeated Escotillo. "He is in prison. No risk of my encountering him. If there is trouble and I am not actually discovered, then I leave a mystery behind me that can engage all their energies. Don Cristobal de Zaurigi led the girl away. But Don Cristobal de Zaurigi was in prison at the time. The girl obviously is lying obstinately. Nothing can be done with such a person."

He got a laugh in return. "Ingenious, but it concerns you more than me. Think it well over, and see me to-morrow."

"When do I start?"

"I shall tell you to-morrow."

"Where am I to lead the girl?"

"That too you shall know to-morrow."

"What is her name?"

"That, too, to-morrow."

A cold nod. Escotillo knew himself dismissed. He bowed and went out.

In his room that night he paced up and down in energetic thought; anger and self-contempt possessing him in turn. A thought struck him — the girl — what is she like? He had not thought of asking.

He remembered something he had been told. She was eighteen, a woman of the noblest rank in Spain, brought up with special care.

"A complete innocent" — he recalled that much of her description. . . . He saw that after all the business might have its pleasant side. . . .

## CHAPTER III

### THE ESCAPE

WITHOUT a moment's delay Don Cristobal de Zaurigi made his preparations for escape.

All day he was busy collecting the items of a suit of black. He guessed that the men whose duty it would be to dispose of the body would be suitably dressed. In his own wardrobe he found some garments of the hue he sought, but gathering the rest necessitated a round of visits to the other prisoners.

To these, sympathizers all, he confided his plans, secure in the certainty of their secrecy. Tremendous excitement bubbled about the prison. Visits were the order of the day. Everyone went to see everyone else, and the one subject of talk was the proposed escape.

Cristobal was the hero of the moment. His scheme was voted a stroke of genius.

Six gentlemen offered to buy his chance. He refused them.

Four offered to fight him for it. He declined with reluctance. They were friends of his, and he hated to refuse them anything.

"On some future occasion," was all he could promise them.

All wished him good luck and gave him what help they could. Enough garments to equip three men were smuggled into his cell by callers under the very noses of the turnkeys. Contributions of money came in. Cristobal received seventeen separate invitations to dinner about the prison that evening. Good-natured as ever, he actually presented himself at five of them, apologizing to the others.

Night fell. Cristobal was in his own room by nine and remained there, the door ajar. At eleven o'clock it was the custom of the turnkey to visit each cell, make sure of the presence of the lawful inmate, and turn the key.

Cristobal stood for an hour, his eye at the crack of the door his ears busy. Somewhere after ten o'clock, led by a turnkey with a lantern, four men passed up the winding stairs at the end of the stone corridor, bearing a shell for the reception of the body. A fifth man, evidently in charge of the melancholy duty, followed. A rapid glance, and Cristobal was busy.

He was already dressed in black, and with fevered haste he now shaved off his moustache, thus not merely obliterating something of his own identity, but making an approach to the appearance of the fifth man, who, he had noted, was clean shaved.

In five minutes he was on guard at his door again.

In the room above faint noises told of the carrying out of the task of the moment. At length footsteps sounded on the stone stairs. Peeping out Cristobal saw to his delight that the turnkey again walked first.

Joy! All went well.

Their way shown dimly by the lantern, the coffin-bearers came, slowly and with difficulty under their heavy load, down the narrow and winding stairway, their director bringing up the rear. The turnkey reached the landing outside the door of Cristobal's cell, went on down the next flight, the coffin followed.

The moment for action had come.

Slipping quietly from his cell, Cristobal unobtrusively crossed the few paces that separated him from the procession, and, taking him gently by the cloak, with proper gravity addressed the foreman of the business.

"Your work here is complete?" he inquired, his voice pitched in the low key one adopts in presence of the dead.

"Yes, señor," said the man, his own voice responding in little more than a solemn whisper.

Cristobal held up a purse.

"The deceased gentleman left this for division among you and your mates. I have a receipt ready for your signature. Oblige me by stepping into my room here for a minute."

Without hesitation — Cristobal had most convincingly placed the bag of coins in his hand at the right moment — the man came back. Cristobal gently shut the door behind them both. . . .

The man turned. Between him and the door stood Cristobal, gripping in his hand the back leg of a chair he had prepared beforehand, and bearing a look of frightful savagery on his face. The man started back in terror. Cristobal leant towards him.

"Sing a note, my blackbird, and I'll wring your throstle throat!" The man was speechless.

"Down on your back on the bed!" commanded Cristobal. The mute collapsed as directed. Cristobal took the purse away, and working at top speed trussed him helpless, gagging and binding him firmly down to the bed frame with sheets he had already torn up for the purpose.

"A word," he said, " a whisper, and you are a dead man!"

So swift and sure was he at the work that in less than a minute he had finished the job, and, snatching up the man's cloak and hat, went flying quietly down the stairs after the others.

THE difficulties of the cramped, curved descent had prevented them going very far ahead. As Cristobal reached the foot of the stairs he saw the little group just pulling up at the locked gate across the courtyard, the turnkey looking back. Evidently the absence of the foreman had but just been discovered.

Cristobal's appearance at that moment, however, hatted, cloaked, black-garbed, seen but dimly by the light of the lantern the turnkey was holding up, was sufficient. As Cristobal hurried his footsteps to catch them up the group went on. He overtook them. In silence the bearers proceeded with their burden under its sombre drapery, across yards, down passages, keeping slow and solemn step, mutely challenged by an occasional sentry, passed without a word but with a respectful salute to the coffin as the turnkey with his lantern was recognized. And close behind them, in step, followed Don Cristobal de Zaurigi, black garbed, cloaked, hatted, head bowed, a very proper foreman of mutes.

The outer gate was reached.

"Here," thought Cristobal, "comes trouble."

As he feared, the turnkey, standing by the sentry, flashed his lantern over the features of the bearers as they passed, even stepping in front of the coffin to throw the light on the two bearers whose faces had been obscured by the mass of the shell they helped to bear.

"Knows his duty, this fellow," said Cristobal to himself, and inwardly anathematized his zeal. Still, all must be chanced. He had his plan.

He had two crowns ready in his hand. He held these well out towards the turnkey and at the same moment clumsily dropped them. They rang on the cobbles. Instantly the turnkey, the sentry, and Cristobal stooped to pick them up. Cristobal secured one, the sentry the other. The turnkey was much too intent on getting the coins into his fingers to lift his eyes higher than their hands as they both passed the money over.

As Cristobal's coin preceded the sentry's into the avid palm, "Thank you, comrade," he murmured politely, and passed on, his face never once glanced at, and now in shadow.

Four paces more. . . . The prison door closed massively behind them.

Cristobal wiped a little dew of perspiration from his forehead.

"This is easy," he chuckled.

So far, so good. But to be out of Santa Ildefonso was one thing, to pass the city gates at that hour of night quite another. All depended on the proceedings of the men carrying the shell, and the upshot of the inevitable parley at the gate.

WHAT to do now was a point. Cristobal had never been able to decide, despite all the cudgeling of his brains that day, and he had been forced to leave it to the inspiration of the moment. "The idea will arrive at the moment," had been his characteristic sentiment in dismissing the subject. Well, the moment had arrived, but the idea, the idea — . He plunged in three seconds through several tornadoes of thinking. . . .

Ahha!

Slackening his pace, and letting the four bearers go on ahead, he slipped off his cloak and hat, threw them into a dark corner, and came running after the four.

He saw them halting beside a carriage which had evidently been waiting for them. They rested the shell on the wheel, and were looking back the way they had come. Reaching them he addressed them in business-like fashion.

"You gentlemen have just come from the prison?" he enquired.

"Yes," replied one of the men, "but our foreman seems to be remaining behind."

"That is so. I have just had to fetch him back to speak with the governor," explained Cristobal. "You are lucky fellows. The gentleman you have there, wrapped up so snugly in his wooden overcoat, had very thoughtfully left a handsome purse for distribution among you, and your foreman — let me see — what is his name?"

"Nunez."

"Ah, yes, Nunez, so he told me. Well, Master Nunez is now counting over the cash, and will join you immediately. Where are you for?"

"For Cortegas," replied one of the men, "but I suppose we had better wait here for Nunez?"

"By no means," said Cristobal. "He will be coming on immediately, but in the meantime you are to proceed outside the gates and wait for him a little along the Cortegas Road."

With no more ado they deposited the shell inside the coach, and themselves climbed on. As the driver took up the reins, "Tell the guard at the gate," called Cristobal, "that Master Nunez will follow close behind."

He left them coolly. The coach moved off. He flew back to where he had left his cloak and hat. His heart was beating, but a tremendous zest possessed him.

"All goes well," he breathed.

He hastily put on the hat, and rushed back after the coach, wrapping himself in the cloak as he ran. He was in time to see the carriage halted for the parley with the guard on duty at the gate, which however was soon opened, and the coach allowed to pass through.

Judging his distance, his pace, and the pitch of his voice to a nicety, Cristobal came hurrying up, calling, "Hi! Hi!" loudly enough to catch the ear of the soldier closing the gate, but unheard by the mutes in the rumbling coach, which went clattering on over the cobbles.

The man at the gate held it ajar. Cristobal hurried up, called "Hi!" again to the coachman, who, hearing the hail this time, looked back and began to pull in his horses. Cristobal gave a nod of thanks to the sentry.

"Name?"

"Nunez."

Nothing further. He slipped through the gate and overtook the coach. Glancing back he saw the gate shut behind him. At the same moment he was level with the driver, who looked expectantly down towards him.

"You are to wait here," he called out. "Master Nunez will be ten minutes or so." Without halting he walked rapidly past the coach and in six strides was lost in the darkness.

Cristobal's spirits soared.

"Ohho!" he chuckled, "all I need now is a horse and a sword. But never mind, here I am, on the road, with a good pair of heels, and my star shining brightly. If they take me now I deserve to rot in that hole of a place for the rest of my life. Give me but half an hour now — "

At that moment the jarring note of a bell broke on the night, clash, clash, clash!

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PURSUIT

"THE alarm bell!" said Cristobal making a grimace. He began to trot along the road, ready however, to take to the grounds of the occasional houses which lay by the roadway. The bell, clanging ever more quickly and loudly, seemed to be shouting to him to stop.

Cristobal felt that he had never heard anything so noisy in his life. It seemed a marvel that it did not wake the very sleepers in the houses he passed and bring them rushing out to lay hands on him.

For a time however he went on unmolested, but, after he had progressed about a mile along the road, the sound of horses' hoofs galloping along towards him from behind induced him to take to the field on his right. For nearly half an hour he bore in that direction, crossing several smaller roads and tracks, and at last, feeling himself safer, on striking a decent narrow roadway which bore south he kept to it. All this time, however, he could hear the jangling not only of the prison bell but the great bell of the cathedral, roaring at a rate to alarm the whole country side.

"They do me honour," said Cristobal to himself, "but I am content to be ignored from this time forward, if only they will keep that confounded bell from barking."

The clamour continued, however. More than once he was obliged to lie low in a hedge as horsemen in ones and twos examined the road. "The devil!" reflected Cristobal, "if they keep this spirit up by daylight I shall want all the good luck that was intended for my share."

With eyes and ears busy he went on, angry as he found a brilliant moon rising to his left.

He turned to view the landscape behind him, and as he did so saw plainly three men coming along behind him at a trot. In less than a minute they had overtaken him, and halting as they reached him compelled him to stay also.

They were common ruffians, shabbily dressed, armed however with cudgels and knives. The tallest of the three addressed Cristobal familiarly.

"Hey, brother," he said, "where away so fast?"

SAID Cristobal, pretty desperately, "Good fellow, if you value a whole skin, keep your tongue between your teeth and save your breath for questioning someone else, for I am in no mood to stay to chat."

Said the other, laughing to his mates, "No, nor for any delay, I'll swear. There's a rare bell-ringing to-night, and I think it has something to do with you. I take it that you are an important person, and if so it will be more to your liking I should think to part with your coin rather than have us go along with you."

"You talk sense," said Cristobal, mildly.

"— or to come back with us," said the other slyly, winking at the others.

Thought Cristobal, "Here am I in a difficulty, but I have no doubt other problems as bad or worse wait for me between here and France, and if I cannot make shift to get out of this, and show myself more than a match for these greasy rogues, then I am no man for my own purpose." And considering that he was unarmed, and that with men of this sort, and three to one at that, he need have little scruple as to what tricks he made use of to save his skin, he decided to parley no longer than was sufficient to give him a better chance.

Said he, very placatingly, as if timid, "My friends, let us waste no more time. You want money. How much?" At the same time he made as if to untie the purse at his belt.

"All," said the tall man, truculently, and, tucking his cudgel under his armpit, held out both hands.

Cristobal asked no better chance. Drawing back his right foot he caught the fellow a tremendous kick below the belt which stretched him in agony on his back in the road, and snatching the man's cudgel as it fell leaped furiously at the other two. They were wary, however, and avoided him, and in so doing left him a clear run for freedom if he had cared to take it.

But Cristobal was too hot-blooded to quit a fight once started.

He leaped nimbly after them, plying his cudgel with fury, and after he had given one or two shrewd knocks on the persons of his opponents, one had enough of it and took to his heels. On this Cristobal slashed so heartily at the other — the first man lying all this while groaning on the ground — that in a trice he had beaten the cudgel out of his hand and with a terrible blow across the temples laid him in the road as good as dead for the time being.

Hardly was this done, when he caught the sound of horses' hoofs on the road in front of him. Desperately pressed, he made a step for the fields on his right hand, but bethinking him of the man he had first struck down, who had by now rolled into the dry ditch by the road side, he reflected that the riders must soon learn from him what had passed.

"*Caramba,* Cristobal," said he, "what now?"

He could see on the spur of the moment but one way out.

Drawing the fellow's dagger from his belt, he hauled him off the kennel.

"See this," said he, holding the ugly steel in front of the man's eyes. "You shall have this where it will do you least good if you do not do instantly and without question what I tell you. Get up!"

The man in terror obeyed, groaning in his pain.

Cristobal left him, and stooped over the remaining man, whose cracked head was streaming with blood. He ripped off the sleeve of the fellow's dirty shirt, smeared it in the blood, and wound it round his own head.

Then he slipped back to the first man, who could with difficulty stand, and slipping his arm around his waist, "Come, good neighbour Lazaro," said he tenderly, "come with me. And mark what I tell you, dear neighbour Lazaro. Say no word, and do nothing in contradiction of what I say or do, sweet neighbour Lazaro, or with this knife —" here he gave him a prick with the dagger that made him jump, spite of his cracked head and tottering knees — "I will surely make an end of you, beloved neighbour Lazaro, and take what comes for myself."

With this, turning round on the way he had been going, he began to assist the unhappy wretch along the road in the direction of Seville, and progressing thus in the very middle of the way, plain to see in the moonlight, they were in less than a minute overtaken by a party of officers of the law, who had ridden far on horseback, and were now scouring this by-road as they returned in the direction of the city.

Before they could begin to question, Cristobal broke into loud exclamations of gratitude for their presence.

"GENTLEMEN," he exclaimed, "you see the piteous state of me, and my old friend and close neighbour here, and my poor journeyman who lies in the road a little further back. We are from Seville, and have had work to do to-day at Cortegas, but hoped to get back and into the city to-night, late as it is. We heard the bells ringing, we judged it to be for the escape of some prisoner, and meeting a man running down the road here we bade him stand. But he was desperate, and though we tried to detain him, as good citizens, the villain savagely assaulted us and escaped. Good gentlemen," he continued, tears in his voice, "do you go after him. He has but little the start of you."

"Which way did he go?" demanded the leader of the officers.

"Across the fields to the left," said Cristobal. "Ah, curses on the villain! Look at my head." He displayed the frightful looking rag about his brows. "And alas for my dear friend here," he continued, and gently touched the man with the point of the knife below his waist band, unobserved by the *alguazils.* The poor miserable gave a start and a heart-rending groan.

"Hark to that!" said Cristobal. "Patience, good Lazaro, my old friend, I have you to safety before I leave you. I'm not one to leave an old comrade and neighbour in distress."

And getting his hip well under the sufferer's, and letting him feel the knife point ever so gently resting on his ribs, he began to assist him haltingly forward.

The officers, turning their horses, scrambled over the ditch and rode off across the fields in the light of the

moon, following the direction given them. No sooner were they well away than Cristobal threw his man to the ground.

"There, you trumpery blackguard," he said, "you have served a purpose and may go. They may come back and find you, but if they get much in the way of information out of you, this next hour at any rate, I am no judge of what a belly can stand from a boot."

With that he took again to the fields, but this time to the left hand, following the way the horsemen had ridden, for he judged it certain that if they should detect his traces on the road and go again in pursuit they would not quarter that ground twice over.

The moon was kind enough to veil her brilliance behind a drift of cloud.

Cristobal waved her a hand in acknowledgment of her courtesy, and kept steadily on his way in the dark.

## CHAPTER V

### THE TREACHERY OF ESCOTILLO DE ZAURIGI

ESCOTILLO de Zaurigi received his final instructions. He listened in silence as they were delivered with cold emphasis.

He had on several occasions been entrusted with undertakings on behalf of the same man. The commission he had now accepted was something of a vastly different nature from any of its forerunners. He was still capable of a flush of shame as he realized that only the merest pretence had been made to veil the essential villainy of what was afoot.

A flimsy simulation of reticence had been proffered, to afford him a chance of pretending to himself that there was nothing of which he was aware in his accepted task that should render it offensive to a gentleman. On the exact upshot of his mission he could still feign ignorance.

In his soul however he was fully possessed of the certainty that he was being hired like the commonest bravo, a ruffian of the streets who would lurk in the dark to strike down for a casual employer any man he hated, and slash his face as often as ordered, at a fee of a crown a slash.

The sole reason such a man had not been preferred to him for his present undertaking was that the task in its essential nature happened to need a man of his own peculiar stamp and accomplishment.

Because he was a gentleman, with a handsome face, good manners, refined speech, a fascinating tongue, a rare smile, for these reasons was Escotillo de Zaurigi chosen for a mission whose aim he could not guess, beyond the certainty that it was vile.

But he smothered the faint protest that rose in him.

Something of the means by which in past years he had mitigated his poverty has been hinted. He had beaten those converts too often. Tales fly about. The reputation that had accumulated about him was one to put prudence into even the sort of woman who till this last twelve months or so had been willing to meet him half way.

Money was scarce and growing scarcer. For this task on which he was now embarking he would be well paid.

So by now he had put by all scruple. The die was cast.

His final interview with his employer was brief, and in its way satisfactory. He received a liberal payment on account. His directions. verbal, were brief and clear.

He was to start at once, unostentatiously, making little mention of, and an illusory excuse for his departure. His route was given him, his lodging at Savedro disclosed. His task was recapitulated.

"As to reports? — "

Leave that, he was told. In a manner to be communicated on his arrival at Savedro a channel for messages would be provided.

He nodded. Anything else?

No. Only, scrupulous secrecy, implicit obedience to orders already given, the same to any further which might reach him later, and — success.

This last was spoken quietly to him as a sort of parting wish as he retired, but it was wrapped in a scarcely veiled sneer that ended in the hint of a menace. Escotillo thought it over as he got back to his lodgings. By the time he had reached them and mounted to his room on the floor above the haberdasher's shop in the Calle del Torre d'Oro, he had arrived at a very possible meaning of the wish, the sneer, the menace.

*He was not to fail — on his peril.*

The skin of his face turned cold. He saw now clearly that he was risking in this adventure not only all that as a gentleman he might be supposed to hold dear, but — his life.

Fail in what he had undertaken, turn back to Seville with report of difficulties that could not be surmounted, watchfulness that had baffled him, sheer mischance even that had struck in at the last moment and thwarted his zealous purpose, and somewhere, somehow, at some time, the displeasure of the man he had just left would reach out at him, would touch him, implacably, surely.

MORE than a league from Guipuscadilla stood a house, lonely, guarded by walls, by hedges, a moat.

It was built in the fashion the Moors had imposed on Spain, two stories in height, raised round a central courtyard. This was paved, with beds of flowers about it, and sub-tropic shrubs and small trees. Its entire extent was awninged over in summer, while the music of a slender fountain tinkled about a basin of marble. Tame peacocks moved about this courtyard, and doves dived on white wings from the blaze of the overpowering sun without into its inviting shade.

Secretly Escotillo scouted about and about the boundaries, measuring, probing, surmising. He had made his first visit of inspection within four days of leaving Seville.

As he rode out of Tormeso a man on horseback had overtaken him, chatted with him, questioned him with frank Spanish curiosity as to his destination, his starting point, his business. He had met him on a footing of reserve yet sufficiently communicative to avoid raising too busy speculation, had lied on all three points — and had been staggered a little when his fellow traveler with a cynical laugh revealed the fact that he too had come from Seville, dispatched by the same man who had sent Escotillo on his mission, and in meeting him and questioning him was obeying directions. He promised to forward a favorable report of Escotillo's discretion.

All Escotillo learned of this man was that lodging had been obtained for him at Savedro, that the girl was at her father's house as usual, that the inn called The Moor's Head, standing at the junction of the highways leading between Savedro and Guipuscadilla, Tormeso and Zabara, was the selected place to which he was to lead the girl, and that the matter was now in his hands.

During his three days' ride from Seville to Tormeso, where he had slept the night before, Escotillo had had time to get used to the idea of his mission. His spirits had recovered. There was something romantic about

*Then the man's dagger hand was wrenched free—Through a mist Cristobal saw*

his adventure — the unknown, the novel. He felt a rising desire to get to work.

He found his task intriguing. It challenged his ingenuity.

The immense thorn hedge was impenetrable. He had gone its long length carefully, and was assured of that.

In front of the house itself, so spacious that the mansion showed nothing but its roof, was a courtyard, with large gates. In front of this courtyard was a moat, which after running the full length of the outer wall, turned inwards at both ends and went down its side walls, cleverly curved so as to disappoint the eye unduly inquiring from the road.

A wing of the wall, low-arched, spanned the moat at each end, and the thick thorn hedge joined there its hostile rampart.

The moat itself was broad, deep in the middle, shallowing at each side, so that a narrow edging of tall reeds and rushes grew out a little way into the water.

Escotillo pondered well these reed banks, the low arches in the ends of the wall, under which the moat turned.

A mere cart track, a rough country road, barely fit for wheeled traffic, passed in front of the courtyard.

One evening, when night was fast coming on, a bullock cart passed along this road in front of the house. In it were two men and a few rough planks. The road was deserted.

At one end of the moat the cart halted. Escotillo and the carter jumped out. Within less than a minute they had climbed in again and the cart, empty, went on.

Dawn was barely breaking the next day when Escotillo de Zaurigi reached the moat again. From where they lay, floating scattered and hidden among the tall reeds, he drew together four planks, and laid two others, smaller ones, across these. While it was still dark he had a raft fashioned.

On this he embarked. It supported him easily above the placid level of the sleeping moat. He oared himself with his hands. With small delay he reached the arch in the wing of the courtyard wall, passed under it, urged his raft into the bed of reeds which continued along this inner reach of water, and crept ashore, hidden in the grasses.

The sun was now up. All was still and silent, save for the songs and movements of birds. He saw meadows, trees, another wall, which he judged separated a more specially private garden from the rest of the domain. Above this wall he could see ornamental trees, flowering shrubs, the peak of an arbour.

A little to his left in the meadow was a patch of trees, and beyond these some bushes in a clump, some fifty paces or so in extent. This clump at one place reached and spread along the garden wall. He looked about him. All was still. No sound or sign of stirring human life.

He crossed rapidly to the trees, entered the bushes, scouted along the wall. There was a gate, locked. He climbed it —

Half an hour later the raft, resolved into separate planks, lay concealed again in the reed bed in the outer moat, and Escotillo was walking back to Savedro, well pleased.

*the figure of the cripple*

He had now the knowledge that in spite of moat, wall, and thorn hedge, he could, if he chose his moment, enter unseen the arbour in which Laura de la Llana was wont to sit and dream alone.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE FALSE HERMIT

Fortune favoured Don Cristobal.

He walked some leagues that night with no further encounter, and by the dawn felt sure he had baffled pursuit. He judged it well to avoid encountering any of the country folk, and, determining that he was well able to pass the day without food, entered a wood he saw across the fields, pushed on into its innermost and most sombre recesses, and lay down to rest. Worn out with his walk and the excitement of the previous night he fell into a deep slumber almost as soon as he had composed himself in a position approaching comfort.

He awoke with a start. He had slept the clock round and more, for to the gloom of the wood was added the shades of approaching night. But what brought him to his feet was the discovery of a face which hung over his.

To be sure it was that of a venerable old man, with long grey locks and a majestic grey beard, and whose age, appearance, and simple dress seemed to proclaim the hermit. But his attitude, stooping, almost kneeling, to peer curiously into Don Cristobal's very face, was disconcerting. Add to this that he gripped in his right hand a businesslike looking staff, and Cristobal may well be excused for the haste with which he scrambled to his feet.

"Father!" he exclaimed.

"My son!" returned the old man, starting back in what appeared to be equal agitation.

"I was startled," explained Cristobal.

"So was I," said the venerable anchorite. He surveyed Cristobal with a searching expression. "I will not ask you what you do here," he said, shaking his head gravely. "This hiding, in the depths of this lonely wood, says little for you. Go your way, young man, and if the words of a man who, in his own youthful folly, has seen much of the wickedness of the world, have any weight with you, give some thought to the matters, whatever they be, which bring you here."

He turned away in evident disapproval.

"Father," said Cristobal, "I had good reasons perhaps for seeking solitude, yet not, perhaps, so reprehensible as you seem to imagine. Let that be as it may. Before we part, give me direction where I may find a meal."

"Keep on that way," answered the hermit shortly, pointing with his staff in the opposite direction to that he himself was taking, and with a curt wave of the hand he withdrew among the giant trees, evincing an almost undisguised haste to quit Cristobal's company.

Cristobal stretched himself, surveyed what he could see of the sky through the interlacing branches overhead, and then, his stomach giving him a determined hint to bestir himself, started off in the direction indicated.

For some time he pushed his way through the vigorous undergrowth, when suddenly he found himself up to his knees in a bog, from which he extricated himself with difficulty in the growing darkness.

When at last he had got out, and had rid himself of some of the mud with which he had been plastered, thought he, "This holy man might have spared time for clearer direction. The merest chance might have left my bones in that bog to wait for the Last Trump."

As he said this, his hand happened to rest on his belt, from which his purse had depended. He started. The bag was gone. So too was the knife he had acquired the night before from "dear neighbour Lazaro."

In a flash the moment of his waking rushed across his memory. The hermit had been bending over him, he recalled the old man's hurry to begone — the curt and — could it have been treacherous? — direction, the celerity with which the old man had disappeared.

"The old thief!" exclaimed Cristobal. "Wherever he has betaken himself, my purse has gone with him."

Dark as it was he turned on the way he had come and went hurrying back. Alas, before long he was hopelessly lost. Dense undergrowth, tangled creepers, and gloomy tree trunks shut him in on every hand. The shade of the wood, darkening rapidly to night, closed about him like the walls of a tomb.

KEEPING resolutely on, however, he reached at length a part of the wood where the trees became more scanty. But the ground grew more and more savage, rocks both craggy and slippery thrust themselves through the soil, making passage difficult. Still persisting, most unwilling to spend a second night if it could be avoided without something to stay his stomach, Cristobal found himself at length on the edge of a deep ravine, at the foot of which he could hear but scarcely see a brawling stream making its noisy progress. The sides of the barranco were steep and dangerous, and Cristobal reflected that, even if he succeeded in getting safely down, climbing up on the further side might be too perilous in the darkness.

Spite of himself a halt till the morning seemed the only possible course.

Hungry and angry, and with a lively resentment against the Old Man of the Woods, he threw himself down among the mosses which carpeted the ground over and about the roots of a gigantic oak perched on the edge of the crevasse, and settled himself to what sleep fortune might send him.

To his surprise he had lain there but a few minutes when his nostrils were saluted by the appetising smell of frying meat. He sat up and looked about him. The forest, its trees, its rocks, its ravine, were all he could see. But the smell was undoubted. It grew in its

alluring intensity. He stood up, moved about a step or two — from a hole in the ground on the other side of the great oak a thin smoke was streaming, and with this mingled the undoubted odor of frying bacon.

The hole in the ground was clearly no entrance for anything larger than a rabbit. But "Rabbits," communed Cristobal with himself, with that sound sense which after all was not lacking in his mental composition, "at least all those rabbits I ever met or heard of, do not fry bacon." He stepped to the brink of the chasm and looked down.

On the rocks at the further side of the stream the faint reflection of a light showed him that somewhere in the descent beneath him must exist an opening from which the gleam of a fire escaped.

An entrance to the underground chamber must be in the wall beneath his feet.

To a hungry man the generous smell of the frying bacon was unsettling to the judgment, and his first impulse was to scramble down whatever the risk. But a delay while he searched in the dark for a possible way down gave time for wiser thought. It would be as well to discover what sort of man or men used the cavern.

A hole in the ground is not the most usual lodging for your respectable citizen, and, though Cristobal was bent on avoiding for a time the busier haunts of mankind, he had the sense to recognize that it would be all to the good if he gained some preliminary insight into his possible new acquaintance.

Lying down therefore at the brink he sent a loud hail downwards from the vantage ground of the edge of the chasm. After a second or two he hallooed again, and, waiting a brief space longer, saw emerge into view no less a person than the recluse of the woods.

With part of his person lost in darkness, one side illuminated by the unseen fire within the cave his venerable hair and whiskers stirred by the night wind, he stared up in evident effort to make out who it was that thus hailed him.

"Who calls?" he queried.

"A friend, father," answered Cristobal, who saw good reason at the moment for being civil. "We have met before. Is there a way down here?"

The hermit below made a movement which betrayed both surprise and discomfort. He shook his head. "You must walk a full mile further along before you reach the end of this cutting," he called up, "and the way back here by the bed of the stream is both tiring and dangerous."

To Cristobal however it was so plain that his company was not wanted that he instantly determined to run all risks to get down.

"Nevertheless," he shouted cheerfully, "expect me, sooner or later."

HE made his way slowly along the edge of the ravine, and after fifty paces or so quested back in the other direction. Free from all doubt as he had good reason to be as to the wisdom of relying on the hermit's directions, he was by no means surprised to find at length plain traces of a descent often used. Down this he footed with some difficulty, and within five minutes of his first hail was facing the holy man at the entrance to his abode.

While scrambling down he had had time to think over the coming encounter, and his first plan, which was to accuse the hermit of the theft, search him if need be, and regain his purse, was, he saw, easily capable of being bettered.

He had lost his knife. The hermit, he felt sure, had that, and might have friends within call. Better try what wit could do.

Accordingly he greeted the man in friendly fashion, and edged his way into the cave with no show of aggression. Better than that, he assumed the air and style of a chattering fool, babbled of his loss, kept his suspicions to himself, and wound up by congratulating himself volubly on his foresight in carrying most of his coin inside his breeches. Down one knee of these he had stuffed a good handful of leaves, and giving it a slap with his hand, "Here," said he, "was something worth the fellow's while if he had but known."

The hermit gave a friendly laugh.

"Take care," said he, "how you give your secrets away. You are safe with me, of course, but in other company you would do well to be more discreet."

"Ah, father," said Cristobal, "but here I know I can lay suspicion aside."

"True," said the hermit benignly.

THE cave was ample, made comfortable with a skin or two, a bench, a table, and a fire on which reposed a pan in which some slices of ham were frying. There were in addition several stools. "For a man who lives here solitary," mused Cristobal, "this eremite is lavish with his furniture."

"You fare not so badly, father," said Cristobal.

"Once every twelvemonth, on this very day as it happens," said the hermit, "I permit myself a reminder of those worldly pleasures I have learned to forego."

"And do those pleasures ever include a drink as well as eating?" queried Cristobal.

"Undoubtedly," replied the hermit with a sigh. "The test of the sincerity with which I have laid the world aside would be incomplete without."

"I am unfortunate then," said Cristobal, "for these same weakness, eating and drinking, still have a hold on my imagination."

"Who shall blame you?" said the hermit. "Yet, at some more fitting moment I would give you reasons" — he broke off. "Perhaps," he continued, "when you have heard my story — "

"I should wish to," Cristobal assured him.

"To-morrow then. For tonight, accept what small hospitality I can offer, and take your sleep in this humble cave."

"I ask nothing better," said Cristobal. "A meal and a sleep will make a new man of me."

"Then draw up," said the hermit, who had been busy at the pan. Cristobal seated himself at the table, and soon he and the hermit were sharing an ample meal of ham and eggs washed down with a very acceptable bottle of wine.

The hermit was affable, but Cristobal, however freely he responded, never lost sight of the fact that here was undoubtedly a thief who had despoiled him, and he meant getting his money back. The meal was not more than fairly over than he professed himself worn out for want of slumber. The old man directed him to lie down on a couch of fern in the corner. This he did and throwing his arms over his face, addressed himself to feigning sleep, all the while taking a furtive glance from time to time between his scarce shut eyelids.

Half an hour had passed when the hermit, rising

and listening intently to Cristobal's slow breathing, came tip-toeing over to him, staff in hand.

Gripping the staff in his right hand, with his left he began gently to raise Cristobal's arms from their protecting position on his head. Whether the fellow meant murder or not must remain undecided, for at this instant Cristobal made a lightning grab at his throat, seized it, and pulled him down on the fern with him.

A desperate struggle ensued. The hermit's strength and agility were miraculous for so aged a man, but Cristobal kept his grip, and protecting his head with his arms from the shower of blows the hermit rained on him, gradually strangled his man into helplessness.

Not till he had him black in the face did Cristobal relax his hold, and this he did only to bind him, hand and foot, with strips ripped from his own flowing garment.

He felt no surprise as he did so to find that the hermit's venerable locks, his majestic beard, were both removable, and that inside the robes of the anchorite he discovered a stout fellow of five and thirty or so.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE FIGHT IN THE CAVE

DRAGGING him well off the couch of ferns, and flourishing the staff, "Now, my lad," said Cristobal, "you know what I want."

"My lord," said the man, "feel under the head of the bed."

Cristobal did so, and pulled out his purse, in which his coins lay undisturbed, and his dagger.

"For tonight," said Cristobal, going carefully over the bonds with which he had trussed his man, "you may lie there. In the morning you will come with me, and the officers of the law shall have the handling of you."

"My lord," said the fellow, cunningly, "you must have your own way, but — I ask myself if you are so anxious, after all, to meet these same officers of the law."

Cristobal grew glum. "What do you think you know?" he demanded.

"Señor," said the man on the floor, "I know that someone of importance, to judge by the row the bells made, escaped from Seville last night. I find you, a gentleman on the face of things, hiding in a wood. If I make a bad guess on top of that, am I fit for my life here?"

"And what is your life here," asked Cristobal, laying aside the staff and seating himself to listen at ease.

"The best I can manage," said the hermit, "under difficult circumstances. I used to keep an inn on the road not far from Cadiz, a poor affair at the best, and got a hard living out of it. In an evil moment I yielded to bad advice and took to robbing my customers."

"But surely," interrupted Cristobal, "that is the way of all innkeepers?"

"But emptying travelers' pockets while they sleep, and then raising an alarm that the house has been broken into by thieves, is going beyond the usual practice. I was detected, had to fly, repented of my sins, adopted the life of recluse as the only safe one which would give me a living and an excuse for keeping a lonely life, and alas, meeting you asleep in the wood I fell again to sudden temptation."

"And I suppose sudden temptation induced you to attempt my life just now as I slept," said Cristobal.

"Do not jest with me," pleaded the hermit, "I shall suffer agonies of remorse when you have gone."

"Agony of some sort you are going to suffer," replied Cristobal, cheerfully, "but that will be before I go, for I intend giving you as fair a thrashing as I can contrive. Is there such a thing as a sound strap or a handy length of rope in this cell of yours?"

"Nothing," said the hermit, promptly. "Why not leave me to suffer the tortures of my conscience? I assure you they will be far worse than anything you can inflict."

"Thank me then for showing mercy," replied Cristobal, "I am determined to take the skin off your back with something, and after that I will forgive you freely, so that you can, so to speak, turn your back on your conscience, if it comes annoying you."

As Cristobal said this, he noticed a peculiar look in the eyes of the retired innkeeper, as if a sardonic grin, refused expression in the rest of his face, peeped out from under his brows. He eyed the fellow thoughtfully, his wits at full stretch, all his senses busy. A faint stirring in the air, a suggestion of movement behind him, came to him.

Some instinct warned him to shift his position first and examine the cause of the noise afterwards.

In a trice he swung himself off his seat and leaped sideways. In that very second a dagger drove through the air in such a way that had he remained seated it would have pierced his back.

The man who made the stroke, completely baffled by Cristobal's sudden move, meeting no resistance, dived forward and plunged headlong on top of the hermit, his head striking the other's face with such violence as to stretch him on the ground, crying miserably.

Cristobal was Cristobal at his best at once. The man with the dagger turned to rise, and promptly received a drive under the chin from Cristobal's shoe. He gave a grunt and collapsed on his back beside the hermit, howling in chorus.

With no second's delay Cristobal made a leap for the table on which lay the hermit's cudgel. Only when this was in hand did he give himself time to glance round the cave. In the gloom he could make out four men, one apparently content to linger in the background near the entrance, one, a tall man, was drawing a long sword from its sheath, and two others, each of them armed with sword and knife, were coming towards him.

These facts Cristobal took in at a glance, and his plan, such as it was, to save his skin, was made and in operation before the others had recovered from their surprise at his move.

Springing with cudgel raised towards the tall man, who, still drawing his blade, was forced to step backwards, Cristobal at the very moment of delivering the stroke swept round on the nearest of the other two.

He had judged his distance to a nicety.

UTTERLY unprepared, the fellow received the smashing blow across his skull so entirely without attempt to guard himself that, falling on the bone with a sound like the striking of an empty tub, Cristobal's cudgel, doing honest work for the first time in its history, drove every spark not only of sense but of life itself out of the cracked headpiece, and stretched the man dead on the floor.

The second man, appalled, shrank back. Cristobal, stepping at him, was met with a broad defensive sweep of the dagger which kept him off, and, desperately hurried of necessity in all he did, he turned on the tall man.

He was just in time to meet and throw aside with his cudgel a hurried downward slash, but springing on-

wards, well inside the man's guard, he swung his cudgel up, caught the blackguard a knock under the right elbow which made him shout, and then, convinced that against two swordsmen there could be no profit in remaining, he leaped for the exit of the cave, resolved to throw all his courage and dexterity into dealing with the man he had noticed lingering there.

At the same moment the two swordsmen jumped after him, weapons raised. Cristobal, the muscles of his back shrinking convulsively as in thought he felt the cruel stroke of the blades into his shoulders, made a frantic forward leap.

With a dexterity born of long use and custom the man at the entrance suddenly swung a crutch up from under his left arm, and, catching Cristobal fairly in the breast as he jumped, thrust him violently backwards.

The young man fell sprawling on his back, his breastbone almost driven in by the blow, and his cudgel flying from his hand.

He saw death on that instant, but his was a nature in which the instinct of fighting soared with the oncoming of defeat. The thrust with the crutch, for one thing, had given him a moment or two of longer life, for it had sent him backwards under the very slash of the two pursuing swords, and neither had touched him.

Feeling about frantically for his cudgel, his fingers gripped instead from the ground the dagger of the man he had felled. With this, twisting over like an eel, and raising himself on his knees, he flung himself forward, and plunged the blade into the thigh of the nearest swordsman, who had turned to get a stroke at him.

The man, cursing, stumbled forward. Cristobal struck again, this time in the groin. With a hideous howl the man toppled headlong, all these movements of his interfering with the freedom of the swordsman, the tallest of the gang, whom from the first Cristobal had somehow judged to be the most capable fighting man of the lot, and who by lucky chance had never got opportunity for a fair stroke.

A BURNING joy swept over Cristobal. In this fight, so hopeless at the start, he had met and held his own with five men, and in but twenty seconds or so here were but two on their feet, and one of these was a cripple, and well content apparently to keep out of the fray. A sudden passion of conquest ran through his veins. He felt himself victor, that nothing less than complete triumph awaited him here, and with a splendid confidence and a shout meant to terrify he flung himself on the tall man.

He stopped with his knife a vicious upward slash, but lost the knife in doing so. He grabbed at and caught the man's dagger hand with his right, and now fairly breast to breast made a last effort to render the combat a mere wrestle.

But his good fortune had deserted him.

He had never fairly got his feet under him from his last spring. He was falling forward on to his knees, the wild grab he made for the man's sword arm missed, and twice he got the hilt dashed down on to his head. He felt himself failing, made a final effort, and as he fell, wrenched his man over and brought him to his knees with him. Shooting up his left hand he felt a brawny neck under his clutch, and drove his fingers frenziedly into the flesh and sinews, lifting his face towards the other's chin at the same moment in an effort to protect himself from the sword hilt.

He received a shower of stunning blows with the iron guard, dealt hastily but with cruel effect on the crown and back of his head, but his finger's grip never loosened. Then the man's dagger hand was wrenched free. He grasped for it again, missed it, but heard the dagger fall, and felt the hand endeavouring to wrench his own grip from the writhing throat. He caught the wrist — somehow the man above him seemed to be reeling over — desperately but still hoping he tugged.

Through a mist he saw the figure of the cripple leaning towards him, crutch raised for a blow.

He writhed out of the way, strained to drag the man above him into the path of the stroke, was pushed down onto his back and held there, saw the crutch poise and come sweeping down —

There was a horrible rending sound. The blow had fallen, smashing what it struck. The man above him collapsed without a sound. The cripple from behind had struck him dead with the crutch.

Cristobal pushed the body off from his breast and sat up, giddy and bewildered, but very much alive.

He could use his eyes, but further effort was beyond him. He saw the cripple plainly for the first time. His left leg was withered, his right arm was missing. His face wore the most savagely inhuman grin of satisfaction Cristobal had ever witnessed. He leaned over the body, dragged it from where it lay across Cristobal's thighs, examined the face, nodded in great good humour.

"So much for Pantaloni!" he exclaimed with a laugh full of hideous merriment. "Señor," as Cristobal endeavoured to get to his feet, "take your time. We have full leisure."

## CHAPTER VIII

### DON CRISTOBAL REFUSES TO BECOME A LIEUTENANT OF BRIGANDS AND THEREBY MAKES AN ENEMY

THIS was all very well, but as soon as Cristobal had fetched his wind he got up and in a businesslike manner appropriated for himself what little security the place afforded. He examined the blade dropped by his last antagonist, found it to be reasonably good, unbelted the dead man and girt himself, selected the handiest of the knives lying on the floor, kicked the other weapons into a corner, took his stand near the exit and, feeling now in better trim, despite a good deal of pain from the bruises he had received about the head and chest, looked his enquiry at the one-armed man.

That gentleman, who had coolly and in silence watched Cristobal's movements with nothing more than an approving nod, gave now a dramatic flourish of the hand, and, seating himself on the table, addressed him.

"A very happy ending to the affair, señor."

"As far as I am concerned," agreed Cristobal. "These other gentlemen might raise some objection, but I am sure none of them are anxious to talk much."

The other waved off the subject with an air of disdain. "We need concern ourselves nothing about trash of that sort," he began.

"Trash!" protested a faint voice at the far end of the cave, and "Trash!" echoed nearer at hand. The hermit was sitting up, holding his battered face in his hands as if nursing a toothache. The man Cristobal had stabbed in the groin had also got into a sitting posture, and with a white face, on which the sweat of pain stood in big drops, had managed to grunt his protest. The man who had made the first ineffectual stab at Cristobal's back also began to protest.

"Trash!" said he, "and what are you? You stick there, ready to run — "

"Did I run?" asked the one-armed man, sharply.

"Perhaps not, but you left the job to us — "

"And a fine job you made of it, the lot of you," sneered the other. "Four of you, and this gentleman," he indicated Don Cristobal with a dignified wave of his only hand, "unarmed and sitting and with his back to you all, and then you muddle it." He spat contemptuously on the ground. "By God!" he said savagely, "I have done with you. If ever I take on another job, if I do not retire from business this very instant and seek a living in some less disappointing trade, if ever I say I need heads and hands and hearts worth training, worth leading, worth vexing one's soul over as I have vexed my soul over such tripe as you, I will hie me to some pious institution, where, say, young orphan female blind paralytics are tended, and there recruit me my company."

"How was I to guess he heard me behind him?" came a furious protest.

"Enough!" The one-armed man waved the voice to silence. "It was your duty to know, to guess, to surmise, to suspect."

The man stabbed in the groin advanced his claim.

"This stab in the guts — " he commenced. The other stopped him savagely.

"Serve you well right, you dull clod. Two of you, right over him, and he on his face, and then he knifes you! Jabber away," he went on as the other sought to interrupt him, "and be cursed to you. An hour will see you past jabbering — in this world, if God is just!"

At this the man began to weep piteously. Cristobal was unable to resist an impulse of mercy.

"Who you are, and what exactly you wanted," he said, "is so far a puzzle, but if we are Christians — "

"By God's grace," said the one-armed man, piously.

"Then let us show these poor devils some mercy. Come, lend me a hand. If this brute can win life, let him have a fair chance."

The other grumbled, but made no opposition, and Cristobal examined the five who sat or lay about the cave.

Two were dead, one to Cristobal's cudgel stroke, the other to the crutch of the cripple. The man Cristobal had stabbed was a doubtful case, but something was done for him. The hermit, who had lost most of his teeth, some on the floor and the rest down his throat, was, despite a certain natural limpness, a whole man. The unlucky stabber, beyond a violent headache and a difficulty in moving the jaw Cristobal had kicked, might pass muster.

All three men seemed visibly better in recognizing the unwarranted mercy with which they were being handled.

Cristobal spent some little time in his examination, then turning to the one-armed man, "Good fellow," said he, "you are a mystery to me. You appear to have designed my death, yet you most undoubtedly spared my life, and, I am more than half inclined to think, saved it. There is that about you that raises my gorge, and yet I will not be ungrateful. The long and short of it is that I am about to leave this den for the open air, and if you choose you may accompany me and give me what explanation you please."

Said the other,

"Well said. I will give you the ins and outs of this, and as I have a proposition to make to you we may as well talk outside, for we shall never get these fellows out of the way unless we carry them out."

"Not I," said Cristobal.

"Nor I," said the other indifferently. "Leave them here then, and let us talk in the open."

"Come then," said Cristobal.

Cristobal's new acquaintance picked up a torch of pine, lit it at the fire, and led the way out of the cave and up a path by the side of the stream which pelted along at the bottom of the ravine.

Some fifty yards away from the cave he halted and, seating himself on a smooth rock, motioned Cristobal to follow his example. The torch he set in a crevice, and, his diabolic face and shattered figure harshly illuminated by the flare, he commenced to unriddle the state of affairs to Cristobal.

"In the first place, you must know that in getting you out of the difficult hole you were in I sought my own advantage."

"I never flattered myself that it was an act of instinctive Christian charity," said Cristobal.

THE other grinned. "The ground is cleared at the start then. I may say that the gentleman whose brains I disarranged on your behalf was my lieutenant. I am, as you have guessed, the leader and commander of a band of brothers — "

"Sweetly brotherly," said Cristobal.

"Like brothers we live, like brothers we disagree at times," admitted the other. "To resume, this lieutenant is, was, I should say, a handy fellow, quick in thought, a rare good hand with a rapier or knife, and a worker. I discovered him, a mere mule driver, I trained him, fed him, clothed him, made him my right hand man, and in return, what?"

"Well, what?" asked Cristobal.

"The gentleman grows ambitious, and is bent on nothing less than setting up on his own account. Very clever, and no doubt he saw himself a great man in my boots, but when he planned his treason — for as such I treat ambitions of that sort — he should have been wary of treason himself. Instead of leaving me openly and raising his own band, he must needs endeavour to come at one ready made. In short, behind my back he had sounded some of my best men — "

"Are those your best?" asked Cristobal, indicating the cave.

The other shrugged his shoulders. "Those? — The herd," he replied. "Stuff we use or throw away as occasion directs. To continue the instructive story of Pantaloni, the gentleman of whom I am speaking. The men he sounded blabbed to me. I do not mind admitting that he was a man of parts, and I was in two minds what to do about him. It might even have come to an amicable arrangement, a sort of partnership, between us. But I am a man of quick decisions. I watched your evolutions in the cave with an interest you little suspected. You never thought, young man" — this in a most paternal tone — "when you did your dance in the cave there with me for spectator — "

"Not spectator alone," interrupted Cristobal, rubbing his bruised breastbone.

"Ha, the foot of my crutch?" grinned the one-armed man. "A weapon my disabilities have compelled me to bring to practiced perfection. Well, as I say, from the first you exhibited a combination of mental and physical agility that liked me. That kick you gave under the chin to Luis — capital. The rap that put Roderigo to sleep, good in the execution, a masterstroke in conception. When you slit the bowels of that other dolt whom we have left squealing in the cave — he'll be finally quiet, I hope, by the time we return — thought I, What am I throwing away here? and when you pulled Pantaloni down on top of you, and manoeuvered him so as to make him a guard between you and my crutch, well, my mind was made up. What I intended

for you I gave to Pantaloni, and now it remains for you to make the most of your chance."

"Explain a little," said Cristobal.

"Young man," said the one-armed man, "I offer you the post of lieutenant in the place of the late Pantaloni."

Cristobal looked him over. He had been compelled to listen to this extraordinary diatribe partly from natural interest, partly because he could see that he was by no means out of the wood yet, and partly because he was both weak and giddy from his late exertions and appreciated a rest. Added to these reasons was a great curiosity to learn more.

THERE was about the cripple who sat before him a sense of power, grotesquely set off by the satyr-like face, the maimed figure, the habit of dramatic gesture, the pose of head and body, the lines of the cloak the fellow frequently draped and redraped about him with eloquent movement as he talked, that roused in Cristobal a desire to hear him speak further. He had a sense of personal safety. Quick and sure judgment of men, on certain lines, in certain moods, Don Cristobal possessed, and here, he made up his mind, was no present danger, but a genuine offer of alliance, put forward for fair consideration. Said Cristobal thoughtfully,

"What exactly does the offer imply?"

The cripple threw his cloak aside again with an expansive air.

"I see," said he, "you are a man who likes to look ahead. Good. Of such are great leaders made. Know then that my name is Roque de Tormes, and I have a knack of what prigs call villainy. I am a man of neither scruples nor fear. There you have the difference between me and common man, who, equally villainous in intention, is hindered by both doubts and trepidations. In a word I do without hesitation what other men merely wish to do and are afraid to. Realize this characteristic, realize also the money there is to be made by a man who will put in hand and carry through to a successful finish certain jobs men earnestly wish to see done but fear to undertake themselves, and you will get a glimpse of the prospect that lies before you."

He paused, regarding Cristobal earnestly. Cristobal bent his head without speaking.

"I am, as you see, partly, but less than you might imagine, a cripple. The activities of my mind outstrip those of my body. I am getting on in years. I had worked single handed all my life, but the accident that shattered my right arm proved a turning point in my life. I saw I had rare brains, a capacity for organization. I put these to use. I evolved a gang, I rule them with kindness and severity, judiciously mixed. I am a force, a fact, to be utilized — to my own profit first of all. I am known. In short, young man, if there is a dirty job to be done, there exists under the rose a knowledge of the man who will do it, swiftly, surely and secretly, providing you pay him well."

"And do you do me the honour of offering me the post of?" — queried Cristobal.

"Second in command," came the prompt answer.

Cristobal eyed him thoughtfully before he spoke.

"Now," said he at length, "what your real name is I do not know, but let me say that you are a black villain."

"Admitted," said the other, coolly.

"Keep your foul tongue still when I speak," commanded the young man with rising disgust, at the same time placing his hand on the hilt of his newly acquired sword. The cripple with a lightning movement swung his crutch, gripped in his left hand, over his right shoulder, and grinned like a devil. Cristobal kept his grip on his sword hilt but made no effort to draw the blade. He continued speaking.

"You are a gallows bird, a hundred times over, I make no doubt, and my gorge rises at you. The devil of it is that you undoubtedly saved my life. Well then, understand that in return I spare you" — the other laughed cynically — "and even feel compelled to assure you that I will not of my own free will disclose your secret. But I hope to hear that Justice has put her foot on you, for a foul and viperous beast, for whom hanging is too good. Now, let us part, for the air you breathe sickens me."

He stood up, so did the other, keeping a couple of yards away.

"Soho, my blade, that is your talk, eh? Well, you have been frank enough and we know where we stand."

"I do not care a maravedi whether you understand me or not. I wish to God you had left me alone in the cave, and I would willingly have taken my chance of dealing first with the brute whose throat I held and afterwards with you."

"You would have been lying where he lies."

"Perhaps," said Cristobal, but inwardly acknowledged there was more than a little truth in the boast. "I see no need for further parley. Go your way to the gallows, and I'll go mine — "

"Where?" sneered the other.

Cristobal made him no answer. He was feeling sick. He gave a glance up the side of the ravine, picked out the path by which he had descended, climbed along over the rocks to it, and began the ascent. The one-armed man politely held the torch over his head.

Cristobal reached the top. It was now near midnight, he judged. The moon rose high, and afforded some light among the rocks and trees which shut in his view.

Cristobal struck south and east. From this part of the world he felt happy to get away.

## CHAPTER IX

### RENDEZVOUS AT "THE MOOR'S HEAD"

WHETHER "The Moor's Head" was designed for an inn is a question no one can decide. If so it was built by a madman, for it was three times too large for its trade. It stood at the point where the unspeakable road from Tormeso to Zabara is crossed by the unutterable track from Guipuscadilla to Savedro. Whatever may have been the state of affairs in the past it is certain that traffic among these four villages by way of "The Moor's Head" had long since dwindled to the merest trickle.

A few sore-backed mules might occasionally halt for an hour or so there, or even for a night, while their drivers spent some trifle of pesetas on fat Miguel's sour wine, but a guest of any importance, a traveler considerable enough to occupy the sitting room upstairs with bedroom attached, was a thing almost unknown.

Fat Miguel would never have grown so rotund on his profits as an innkeeper. His paunch, which was noticeable, owed its origin and continued existence to his activities as a rearer of chickens and in the breeding of pigs, in the care and marketing of which he showed great shrewdness. The Moor's Head in fact was worth more to him as a bait for an occasional gossip than as a source of income.

Nevertheless one hot September evening Miguel might have been discovered flitting about his inn with

a fine air of importance. He went nimbly up and down the stairs that led from his great stone kitchen to the two guest rooms above. Tereza, his one assistant, a very fair second to her master in girth, paid frequent visits to the upper floor also.

From time to time both she and Miguel stood on the threshold of the posada, and gazed at the landscape expectantly. They looked north to Tormeso. The road was blank. They looked south to Zabara. Again, blank. They went at odd times to the corner of the wall of the patio where they could get a glimpse of the road to Savedro and to Guipuscadilla. Again, nothing. They returned to the posada.

It was evident that to-day at least "The Moor's Head" cherished expectations.

THE evening was yet young. Miguel went upstairs to give another look around. Tereza having waddled to the fire and given some attention to what was being dealt with there, lifting a saucepan lid, stirring the fire, giving a cut with a stick to the unfortunate hound who was treading the turnspit patiently and with painful lack of spirit, took up an armful of dry tree branches and chopped logs and proceeded up the stairs in turn.

Miguel came in from the bedroom.

"That's right," he said, as she took the wood over to the fireplace, "we'll have a good fire." He stood pensive for a moment. "I don't know though." She stopped, squatting on her fat hams at the hearth and looking patiently up for his decision. "No," he decided. "I think not, Tereza. Don Cristobal isn't the sort of gentleman who sits over fires."

She began to rise from her knees.

"And yet," — mused Miguel.

She squatted down again. "After all, he may be tired and the evening looks none too promising." She began to lay the fire again. "Well," he said testily, "what *are* we going to do?"

"Why not light a small fire and leave the logs by the side here? If your Don Cristobal doesn't want a fire you can kick this out. If he does, you can put some more logs on."

"Good. Good. That's it, Tereza. Well then, hurry up. Why the devil don't you hurry up?"

Unruffled and without a word Tereza piled up a small heap of brushwood and dried fern, some short branches and a small log or two, struck a light with the steel, and blew a gay little blaze into being.

Miguel in the meantime had skipped out of the room, skipped downstairs, and skipped up again, as she rose from her knees.

"Is there water in the bedroom?" he demanded.

"I think so," responded Tereza.

"Think!" Miguel was scandalized. "Think, hussy! Is this a house where one thinks? "I'll have no thinking when Don Cristobal comes. Is the dinner going on all right?"

"I think so," returned the stolid Tereza.

"'I think so,'" mimicked the exasperated Miguel. "Get downstairs, you fool, and see to things. Mark you, if Don Cristobal de Zaurigi gives me a word of complaint I'll put a stick across your back."

Unruffled, spiritually, Tereza moved to the door leading to the stairs and the kitchen. "What about the water for the bedroom?" she asked. Miguel waved her away.

"I'll see to that. Get you downstairs and look to the dinner."

He ran out in front of her and down the stairs, dipped an earthenware pitcher into a tub of rainwater which stood by the entrance to the posada and cantered back upstairs, wonderfully light on his feet for such a fat man. He went into the bedroom, filled the ewer in the basin, danced back to the large room, stirred the fire, adjusted the white cloth on the table, went and glanced around the bedroom again — plainly Miguel was in a state of not only great but nervous expectation.

*This was no ordinary meal and Tereza caught the laggard turnspit-hound a crack across the skull*

Voices fell on his ear. Tereza — the slut! — was undoubtedly gossiping.

He looked out of the sitting room window. Outside the posada, a pace or two away from the kitchen window, stood a figure of fun, a tall gaunt beggar woman, round backed, fantastically ragged, leaning on a stick, and grinning amiably in at someone in the kitchen Miguel could not see, but who of course could only be Tereza.

Tereza, busy with her basting had found the beggar woman peering in at her but a few seconds earlier.

"My dear love," said the beggar, "this smells fine. Ha! This is no ordinary meal. This is for some great lord, hey?"

"It is for a customer of ours," said Tereza primly, catching the momentarily laggard turnspit a crack across the skull with her ladle. He yelped and went on a little faster in his cage. She spoke with pardonable pride, of which the ladle on the turnspit's head was but a gesture, an expression, with no real malice. Not many inns, look you, could boast of a call for stewed eels, a ham, a couple of fowls, and a haunch of mutton.

"A customer," said the beggar, admiringly. "Ah, what it is to have a name, for honesty and for admirable cooking. Think what wretched fare, at what a

wicked price, you get at most inns, and now, only to smell! — "

She sniffed appreciatively. Tereza was pleased.

"Such an inn," continued the beggar woman, "where such wonderful cooking may be obtained, will secure the patronage of the great. And if you were to tell me," she continued, "that some great lord were coming here to feast this evening, nay, possibly to stay the night, I could well believe it."

Tereza was very pleased indeed. The opulence of the meal she was preparing invested her, she felt, with a dignity and importance, a claim to respect, that seldom came her way.

She looked at the beggar woman. She discovered that she was blind, or something near it.

Over one eye a dirty green cloth was bound. The other eye-socket was empty. Below the cloth an enormous nose projected, a nose which seemed to be endeavouring to serve as not only nose but eyes as well, so inquisitively did it protrude through the window.

"Is this a whole ox I smell, my love?" said the wide slit below the nose. "There will be scraps, eh? And might one ask who this is for? Some great lord — or is it a wedding feast, eh?"

Tereza, quite ready for a gossip, would no doubt have enlightened the inquisitive tramp, but at this moment the voice of Miguel descended abruptly upon the colloquy below.

"Tereza! Tereza! you chattering magpie! I'll skin your back for you if you let the dinner burn. Back to your spits, woman, and you, you frowsty old bag of bones, clear off, or I'll start you off!"

Tereza padded back to the fire. The beggar woman attempted to appease the wrath of Miguel as he hung out of the upper window.

"Now, now, what a fuss to make over a harmless bit of chat. I may be blind but I can smell, and 'tis a pity if an old woman can't let her nose feast on a good dinner, even if her poor old teeth get no chance."

"Your nose and your teeth and you too, go hang," said Miguel, sourly. "You and my cook will chatter, and my dinner will be spoilt. Away, or I'll give you what I promised my cook. Wait," — an idea struck him. He had in one hand the pitcher he had filled from the rain-water tub, only partly emptied into the ewer in the bedroom. He leant out of the window, and poured the whole of the contents of the pitcher onto the bundle of rags below.

NOT a drop missed. The beggar, looking up, seemed paralyzed, and her bundle of rags absorbed the whole shower.

Miguel leant back and laughed, and laughed, his fat sides shaking and aching with merriment. . . . And then, wiping the tears from his eyes, he stooped from the window again to get another look, and he ceased laughing.

The beggar woman had lost her stoop. She had straightened herself, revealing herself as a decidedly tall personage, with a remarkably fine pair of shoulders. She bent her head back to look up, at the same time tearing the green rag from over her eye. Her tottering footsteps had been supported, as she limped, by a staff. This she now brandished in one hand, and, the forefinger of the other pointing up at Miguel, she poured out a stream of terrifying oaths.

"— you and — you, and — you!" she said. "Bring your fat guts down here and I'll rip you!" She flung back her rags. Round her waist was a scarf, from which she selected one of three promising looking knives she wore there. "Come down," she screamed, backing several paces away from the kitchen window to get a better look at Miguel. "Come down here, you bloated . . ., and let me get a swipe at you. I'll — "

Miguel trembled. This was no beggar woman. It was a most undoubted cut-throat of the other sex, whose aspect, actions and threats brought a cold shiver down Miguel's spine.

He did not go down as invited. "I want nothing to do with you," he shouted from his window. "This is a respectable inn, and I warn you — "

He dodged just in time. Whack! came a stone at the window heavy enough and swift enough to have knocked his brains out. He had backed as he saw the visitor stoop. Now he pulled the wooden shutters together. At the same instant he heard Tereza slam to the door of the posada, and the kitchen shutters were closed a second later.

Miguel stole downstairs. Footsteps and blasphemies still sounded without. Tereza had bolted the back door and stood by his fire, basting ladle in hand. Her forehead was sweating. So was Miguel's.

"These brigands! I heard they were about again!" said Miguel, under his breath.

"We should have a gun," said Tereza.

"*Nombre de Dios*, what good would that be? If we killed one we should have the whole gang on us, and get our throats cut in our beds one fine night."

Tereza went stolidly on with her basting.

MIGUEL stole to the window and peered through a crack in the shutter. He could see nothing of the brigand, and heard no sound. He waited five minutes, when, all being still quiet, he stole upstairs again, and cautiously opened the shutter there. Nothing happened, he threw it wide, he looked out. There was nothing to see but the bare sun-scorched landscape. Stay — a quarter of a mile away two beggars were moving across the moor.

One, by the rags and the long-striding legs, was plainly the beggar woman.

The brigand who had pelted the upper window shutter with stones had moved round the posada cursing, at first loudly, then more quietly.

He had prowled round to the rear of the premises when a "Hst!" stopped him.

He turned sharply. A well, disused, with a low wall round it and a cover of thatch over its crank, was within ten paces of him. He stepped towards it. Over the edge of the wall peered a brown face with black beard and black snaky locks.

"Ha!" said the tall brigand.

"Lopez!" said the man down the well, who with his toes in the interstices of the well's brick lining was hanging onto the rope.

"Sancho!" said the brigand in rags.

"What have you learned?" asked the brigand in the well.

"They have a feast preparing. I smelled it a mile off. Eels, fowls, a ham — ."

"I have no smell," lamented the man in the well, climbing out. "I saw the fowls killed, but I waited for something more certain. Ham, you say?"

"Yes."

"And eels, a ham? — "

"And mutton."

"And mutton? Good. It is enough. He is coming. They are coming, that's certain. Sheets have been washed, and dried this morning."

"Sheets," said the ragged brigand. "Then undoubt-

edly that means a bed. This is the news Roque is waiting for."

"So," said the man who had been down the well, and had now climbed out of it.

They glanced at one another, then, "Come," said the man from the well, and turning, the two ran off, up the rugged track that led to Savedro, and after half a mile or so turned off it, and disappeared among the rocky convolutions of the plain.

## CHAPTER X

### THE DISAPPOINTED YOUTH

SLOWLY the posada ventured to its normal, as a snail, once alarmed into its shell, after a time puts out its horns and resumes its disturbed avocation. The door downstairs was opened, the shutters of the kitchen window were flung wide. A savoury smell was permitted to escape into the air of the shining summer evening. Half an hour passed.

The fire in the sitting room upstairs burnt brightly. Downstairs the preparations for dinner proceeded duly. Miguel, fussy but not unsatisfied, came from upstairs into the kitchen for the twentieth time. At the door he caught sight of a young man looking in undecidedly.

He ran down the remaining stairs and made a bow. Only men of Miguel's corporation can make bows as dignified.

"Enter, señor," he said, with a wave of the hand, "and tell me how I can serve you."

With a light and remarkably graceful step the young man came into the kitchen. He kept his hat on. Tereza at the fire turned, gave him a look, and made a bow. With one hand on hip he regarded Miguel, gave him a courteous but reserved little nod, then,

"Tell me — " he said, and stopped.

"Señor?" said Miguel.

"I would know — " said the young man, and again stopped.

Miguel eyed him with surprise. There was something strangely diffident about the young man's speech. Miguel, always curious and inquisitive, ran a speculating eye over him. He was beautifully dressed, his clothes were new and most gallant, his bearing graceful. His face was smooth, oval, large-eyed. His black hair hung in curls on his shoulder. There was about him, as well as an air of youth, an elegance, a delicacy, that gave him an indescribable charm. At his feet he set down a small leather trunk.

"I am at your worship's service," Miguel assured him.

The youth hesitated, looked Miguel over a little doubtfully, then as if suddenly making up his mind over a difficult point, he spread his feet well out, pulled his large hat down over one eye with a rakish air, and with his left hand on his sword hilt,

"Tell me, my good fellow," says he, "have you much company here?"

"Company?" said Miguel. "Is it company your honour seeks? Let me tell you that this inn is noted for the crowd of superior persons, notabilities of all kinds, who flock here for merriment." The young man made a movement which seemed to speak distaste. "Of a seemly and respectable kind," added Miguel quickly.

The youth looked about him with a distinct indecision.

"I did not anticipate this," he said as if half to himself.

"But," resumed the ready Miguel, "as it happens, at this particular season of the year there are reasons why the house is usually extremely quiet. If your worship is in search of peace and repose perhaps — "

The young man glanced consideringly at him.

"I am in search," he said, "of a person."

"Who you think might be here?" asked Miguel.

"Who may possibly be here," said the young man. "Tell me," he continued, "are you expecting anyone?"

"I am, señor," replied Miguel.

"And his name is — "

"That," said Miguel gravely, "I am not at liberty to reveal."

"But," said the young man, "is it possibly the gentleman I am expecting?"

"I trust it may be, señor," said Miguel politely.

The young man flushed.

"Are you trifling with me?" he said with a sudden anger. "If Don Cristobal de Zaurigi is here — "

"My lord," interrupted Miguel, extending his hands, "are you a friend of Don Cristobal de Zaurigi?"

"I am."

"And — you are expecting to meet him, here?"

"That was our arrangement."

"Then use my poor inn, my lord. Do me the honour to ascend to the room which has been prepared for Don Cristobal."

"He is here then?" said the young man, eagerly.

"Not yet," said Miguel. "But I expect him. I prepared for him. Pray ascend."

The youth made no motion to mount the stairs. "Not here yet," he murmured as if to himself.

"But the evening is young. He will most undoubtedly come, and before long," Miguel assured him.

The visitor hesitated, then with a sudden decision, "I will not enter now," he said, firmly. "I shall return, within an hour or so. In the meantime I will leave this trunk in your charge."

He indicated the trunk at his feet and stepped through the doorway and into the open again.

"But, señor," persisted Miguel, "Why not wait? It is hot. This sun is enough to bake one's skin to crackling — saving your lordship's grace — even your horse — "

"I will come again," said the youth, decidedly and walked away. Miguel looked after him. The visitor had no horse.

"The devil!" said Miguel to himself. "Afoot — a gentleman by his speech and dress, and walking — here — at this time!" Here was a mystery. He perpended it for some time, then gave it up and went upstairs.

He looked out of the window there. His late visitor was walking swiftly along the track that led to Tormeso. He pulled the table cloth crooked, pulled it straight again, then went downstairs to the kitchen to worry Tereza about the dinner.

THE visit of the handsome youth had in no wise diminished Miguel's anxiety for the arrival of his distinguished guest. An hour passed. He began to get tired of running up and down stairs, of looking out of the window.

A fresh worry seized him. Supposing after all that Don Cristobal came very late, and the dinner was spoiled.

Supposing that he did not come at all, and the dinner were wasted! A panic fell upon Miguel. He rushed upstairs again and to the window. Again, nothing but the bare plain, the vacant road, over which the shades of approaching dusk were insensibly stealing.

One more visit to the fire, where something in Tereza's face warned him of the reality of his forebodings

regarding the dinner. Unable to keep still any longer he tripped over the stone-floored kitchen, he tripped over the threshold, he then tripped again — over the feet of a man sitting on the bench which flanked the inn door. His clothes were dusty, his hat dropped over his face, his feet sprawled in front of him, and he was fast asleep. Even Miguel's tumble did not wake him.

Miguel picked himself up, and brushed his knees. He surveyed the new comer, but the hat concealing the features baffled his curious gaze. Very well then. Miguel respectfully nudged the sleeping figure. It stirred.

"Señor," said Miguel, earnestly, and increasingly loudly, "Señor — "

The figure started to wakefulness. It drew up its feet, sat upright, and at the same moment with a swift and startled movement drew its hat from over its face.

Miguel clasped his hands delightedly and beamed like an August sun.

It was Don Cristobal de Zaurigi.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE FORGED LETTER

CRISTOBAL yawned. Miguel waited. Cristobal took his hat off and rubbed the back of his head. Miguel was delighted. That action of Cristobal's was one of his little habits when roused. It brought back old days to Miguel.

"Where's the host — are you the host?" asked Cristobal.

"Señor!" exclaimed Miguel, reproachfully, "don't you know me?"

Cristobal opened his eyes wider.

"What, Miguel!" he exclaimed, "my old lackey!" He sat up with a little more animation apparent in his attitude. His eye ran critically over the innkeeper's portly form.

"Ohho, Miguel," he went on, and poked a finger meditatively into the generous curve only too apparent below the host's waist. "Where's all this come from, eh? Someone's given poor old Miguel a nasty kick in the back!"

Miguel laughed complacently. "Ha, ha! But this will pass at fifty. Well met, señor, well met!"

"Well met indeed," responded Cristobal. "An old friend's face is welcome just now. So, turned innkeeper, eh?"

"That is so, señor. When I left your service I determined that there should be at least one honest innkeeper in Spain."

"And where is he?" asked Cristobal. Miguel made an expostulatory gesture, and gave a reproachful "Señor!"

"Well, well," said Cristobal; "and making money out of it, I hope?"

"Alas, no," said Miguel. "This last three years all this district has been haunted — "

"Haunted?"

"Not by ghosts, but by brigands. They rob, they assault, they terrify, they tyrannize, in short they — "

"They behave as brigands. And they hurt your business?"

"It is months since I have had anyone sleep here. But upstairs I have a dining room, sweet and clean, and a bedroom leading out of it, all that a bedroom should be."

"Good. And something to eat?"

"I have some eels frying, a couple of chickens stewing, a haunch of mutton roasting, and in the meantime — " he turned towards the door.

"Ahha," said Cristobal, "I was waiting for the meantime — that is precisely what interests me."

Miguel darted into the kitchen and back again. He bore a beaker in one hand and a small bottle in the other. The cork flew, the most delightful guggling sound rippled archly round the rim of the beaker. . . . "That's better," said Cristobal and held out the beaker again. From his apron pocket Miguel produced another bottle — again rose the delicate chuckle. This time Cristobal sipped more deliberately. He looked at Miguel affectionately. "You are a jewel, Miguel."

"Señor," beamed Miguel, "I am happy as a lark to see you again. But if I am not indiscreet — you told me all in the old days at Seville — what brings you here, in this out-of-the-way hole?"

Cristobal drew a deep sigh. It was some moments before he spoke.

"Miguel, my friend," he said at last, "I am at the very crisis of my fortunes."

Miguel gave him a comical glance and exploded into a loud "Ha, ha, ha!"

Cristobal looked at him sourly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he said, savagely. Miguel made an effort and straightened out his features.

"Damnably amusing, I have no doubt," said Cristobal.

"Señor," said Miguel, deprecatingly, "forgive me, but — in the old days — "

"Yes?"

"Were we not always at the crisis of our fortunes?"

Cristobal grinned ruefully. "Perhaps so, but this is another pair of shoes altogether. I have made a prodigious ass of myself."

Miguel made a terrific effort, failed, and again let fly an explosion of laughter. Cristobal stared at him with brows drawn down in sinister fashion.

Miguel again got his mirth to some extent in hand.

"Pardon, Señor Don Cristobal, but — but in the old days — were we not always — "

Cristobal looked him over grimly.

"Always — ?" he enquired politely.

Miguel made a nimble twist.

"I remarked, were we not always — always" — he hesitated — "meeting people who had made prodigious asses of themselves, señor?" he finished with a fine confidence.

CRISTOBAL surveyed him in an uncomfortable silence for a few seconds. Then, with a nod which acknowledged the dexterity with which Miguel had extricated himself from an awkward position.

"True," he said, "but — Miguel, do you know how much money I have in my purse at this moment?"

"No, señor."

"Not a maravedi." Miguel opened his eyes.

"On a journey, señor!"

"Aye, on a journey. And yet do you know how much I am worth?"

"You shall tell me, señor," said the puzzled Miguel.

"I guess," said Cristobal, "it cannot be less than five thousand crowns to you or anyone else who is clever enough to catch me."

"Jesu Maria!" Miguel raised his hands. "Señor! are you a runaway?"

Cristobal nodded dolefully. "From Santa Ildefonso," he said.

"Prison!" said the astonished Miguel. "What madness have you been at?"

Cristobal drew a deep sigh and stared very blankly in front of him for some seconds before he replied.

"I offended a woman."

Miguel nodded comprehendingly.

"A red-haired woman."

Miguel nodded again, still more comprehendingly.

"A red-haired woman offended, is the devil," said Cristobal.

"Si, señor," agreed the sympathetic Miguel, "and so is a yellow-haired."

"You may be right," answered Cristobal, after a moment's reflection. "And now I come to throw my mind back over the past," he continued musingly, "I have known black-haired women — "

"Yes, señor," the eager Miguel assured him, "and brown-haired — in fact, they can all be the very devil, whatever the colour of their hair."

"When offended," Cristobal put in.

"True — when offended," Miguel agreed. "And in the end, señor, you found yourself in Santa Ildefonso?"

"Precisely."

"But how did you get out?"

Cristobal began to laugh. He rose and flung about him his ample black cloak. Pulling his large black hat well down over his eyes, "Tell me," he said to the highly interested Miguel, "what do I strike you as?"

"A doctor?" ventured Miguel.

"No."

"A notary?"

"No."

"A — señor! Not a — not a — "

Cristobal nodded.

"An undertaker."

CRISTOBAL laughed. "You have it, Miguel. And why I became an undertaker, and how that helped me out of Santa Ildefonso I will tell you when I have washed and have dined. I must rest. I have scarcely slept for three days. I have walked at least a thousand leagues — or so. I am as beaten as a man can well be. I reached your inn, I sat for a moment on this bench, and I immediately tumbled asleep. No matter, a wash will do wonders, a meal will make me half a man again, and a night's sleep will restore to me what I was — and what that was, God judge in mercy," he added piously and genuinely. He stretched himself. He caught sight of Miguel's face turned to him genuinely concerned. It called for some confidence.

"Miguel," he continued, "I am leaving Spain for ever. I had been promised a command in the new expedition against Morocco, but that's gone. I have nothing but my sword. Paris then, and the French service."

"Abandon Spain!" said Miguel, aghast. "You must be in a devil of a dumps."

"I am in a devil of a dumps. I am also in a devil of a hurry. I have ridden two horses to rags and walked myself to a thread. Here I am, all but on the sea coast. I shall get to France by ship."

"The sea! You will be seasick!"

"I shall," said Cristobal, boldly, but turning pale.

"A thousand hells!"

"Two thousand hells," corrected Cristobal with his accustomed liberality, "but it must be done. Tonight I rest here, and I will accept from Miguel whatever of kindness he offers me."

"Excellency," said Miguel, fervently and genuinely, "all my poor inn affords is your excellency's."

Cristobal tapped him affectionately on the shoulder. "I can wash?" he asked.

"There is water in the bedroom," said Miguel,

"But, señor — " he ventured, then stopped.

"Yes?" queried Cristobal, turning, his foot over the threshold of the kitchen.

"In such a desperate case would it be the wisest thing to hamper your movements with a lady?"

"It would be most unwise — therefore I don't," answered Cristobal.

"There is no lady with you then, señor?"

"No."

"Well, then," said Miguel gaily, "there will be the more for you to eat."

"Good, I am lucky to have fallen in with you so well prepared." With these words Cristobal, turning his head towards the kitchen, was about for the second time to step across the threshold.

Miguel bowed cheerfully.

"Why, sir, it was well you wrote."

Cristobal, sharp-eared, again checked his steps a little as he enquired, "Wrote?"

"Wrote, señor. . . ." There was a little pause Miguel began to lift his eyebrows. "I got your letter."

Cristobal turned round on the step, scanning Miguel enquiringly.

"Letter — wrote — what are you talking about?"

Said Miguel, very seriously, and puzzled in his turn, "I say — your letter, señor — I got your letter — "

Cristobal squarely confronting Miguel, with hands planted on hips, said briefly,

"A letter?"

"Yes."

"From me?"

"Yes."

"To you?"

"Yes."

"When?" Cristobal took his foot off the threshold and came a pace towards where Miguel stood.

"Two days ago," replied Miguel, growing each second more grave as he noted Cristobal's serious face of enquiry.

"Where is the letter?" demanded Cristobal. Miguel fumbled in his apron pocket.

"Here it is, señor." He handed it over and stood silent, while Cristobal unfolded and read the paper. . . . "Is anything wrong?"

Cristobal gave him a blank glance. "Is anything right?" he snapped.

The young man stood thoughtful for a second or two, then again ran his eye over the letter.

"Supper — for two. . . . Sitting room. . . . bedroom. . . . and a lady. . . . The devil!"

"Señor," said Miguel nervously, "have I made a mistake? The letter seemed plain."

Cristobal tapped the letter with a forefinger.

"I never wrote this letter."

Miguel stood aghast, almost unbelieving.

"But — the signature — Cristobal de Zaurigi — "

"My name — not my writing."

"But, señor, here you are at the hour named."

"Pure chance," replied Cristobal. "But here, as you say, I am. . . . Ha!"

"Señor?"

"This letter was written by someone who knew I had been put in prison."

"Evidently, señor."

"But who," continued Cristobal gravely, "was not aware that I had got out."

"Evidently."

"An acquaintance of mine, or someone acquainted with me, which is not quite the same thing, who has ventured to use my name because he felt himself safe

in doing so." His nostrils began to swell.

"Indeed, yes señor," acquiesced Miguel.

"Using my name," continued Cristobal, musingly. He stood frowning in thought none too pleasant. Miguel waited in silence. Cristobal's brow began to clear. "Well, well. A sitting room, a bedroom, supper for two — we shall see what we shall see."

He turned again to enter the inn. Miguel detained him with a word.

"Señor!"

Cristobal stopped enquiringly.

"Yes?"

"Is it possible that some lady — doubtless charming, probably beautiful, possibly rich, is preparing a delightful surprise for you? Ah, how romantic!"

Cristobal turned upon him a countenance by no means as delighted as Miguel seemed to expect.

"Thank you," said Cristobal, in the voice of one who conveys no thanks at all. "Very delightful — at twenty. But at twenty-five," he went on, in the tone and with the air of one deeply versed in the philosophy of life, "one has learned to be cautious." He reflected with a puzzled air. "Miguel," he said, solemnly, "be discreet."

"*Si, señor,*" Miguel assured him. Another thought flashed across him. "And what about the young gentleman?"

"Young gentleman?" Cristobal hastily took the letter from his breast and ran his eye over it again. "Did I write anything about a young gentleman?"

"No, señor," explained Miguel, "but a young gentleman called less than an hour ago enquiring for you —"

"For me?"

"At any rate for Don Cristobal de Zaurigi. He seemed not merely disappointed but agitated when he learned that you had not arrived."

"Well, I don't know anything about him." Cristobal again stood reflecting with a look none too pleased upon his face, then as was his custom, flinging off serious thought with a shrug of the shoulders. "I will wash," he said, and got one foot at last across the threshold.

Miguel still detained him with a question.

"And supper?"

"Send it up," said Cristobal with decision.

"And if the gentleman who wrote the letter should arrive?"

"Send him up too."

"And the young gentleman?"

"Send him up also."

"And — the lady?"

Cristobal hesitated imperceptibly, then —

"Send her up too. Send everybody up!"

## CHAPTER XII

### DON CRISTOBAL DISCOVERS THE HEROINE

MIGUEL bowed complaisance. Cristobal disappeared into the inn and found his way upstairs. Miguel crossed at once to the fire to see how the dinner fared. The stolid Tereza assured him that all went well. Overhead Cristobal's footsteps sounded but faintly through the solid beaming of the ceiling.

Twenty minutes passed.

Miguel was conscious of a presence in the doorway. He turned. Entering the kitchen was the young man who had made enquiry for Cristobal half an hour before.

Miguel hastened towards him beaming.

"You wish to see Don Cristobal, señor?" he cried.

"Yes," said the young man.

"Señor Don Cristobal arrived here within an hour after you called."

"Where is he now?" asked the young man, a flush spreading over his cheek.

"He is above, your worship." Miguel bustled towards the foot of the stairs, carrying the trunk he had taken in charge. "Shall I announce your worship? What name shall I say?"

The young man hesitated a little.

"I think — I think," he replied, "that I will go up to him unannounced."

Miguel hesitated a second.

"You know Senor Don Cristobal I understand?" he ventured.

"Intimately," replied the young man.

Miguel bowed.

"Then be good enough to ascend, señor," he returned, and waved an inviting hand to the stairs.

The young man nodded haughtily, set his hat at something more of a rake, placed one hand on the hilt of his sword, smoothed his tunic down, accepted the small trunk which Miguel handed him, and with a light but deliberate step ascended the stairs.

Miguel watched him open the door, enter the room, and shut the door behind him.

"Tereza," said he.

"Yes?" answered Tereza from the fire.

"Get on with that dinner."

"I am getting on with it," said Tereza stolidly.

"And no back answers," said Miguel, sternly.

Tereza grunted and basted the haunch of mutton.

"What?" demanded Miguel.

"Nothing," said Tereza.

"Better not," said Miguel.

Tereza made no reply.

THE handsome young man on entering the sitting room upstairs discovered at a glance that the room was empty. He closed the door behind him, set down his trunk, and stood undecided.

From the inner room came the sound of splashing water. Cristobal, within, had filled the earthenware basin from the large ewer and, stripping off all his clothes, had contrived something like a bath for himself, proceeding in stages as the meagre nature of his apparatus necessitated. Then he dressed, feeling mightily refreshed, luxuriating in the sense of cleanliness, freedom from need of hurry, and expectation of a leisured meal. Having slipped on breeches and stockings, shoes and shirt, he turned again to the ewer and gave his face a final refreshing laving. As the water splashed about his ears he fancied he heard a tap on the bedroom door. He listened, the water dripping from his face. Ah — it was a tap. It sounded again.

"Hullo!" said Cristobal.

A youthful laugh sounded without. "Ahha!" said a clear voice.

"Who is it?" asked Cristobal, leaving his ablutions.

"Guess," came the reply.

"Can't," said Cristobal.

"Cristobal!" answered the voice remonstratingly.

Cristobal failed to recognize the tones.

"Come in," he said, as the shortest way to the bottom of the question.

"No, no," came the answer, "you come out."

"I'm washing," said Cristobal.

"Then be quick." The voice proceeded in a lower tone and as if it were being breathed through the crack of the door. "Don't you know how impatient I am to see you?"

"Dear me!" thought Cristobal. Then, aloud, "Are you?"

"Yes. Don't you want to see me?"

"Not that I know of," said Cristobal candidly.

"Oh!" The voice was touched with chagrin. "Shall I tell you that I'm going?"

"You can if you like," said Cristobal, "but if you care to wait a minuite I'm coming."

He picked up the towel, applied it to his face, stepped to the door, opened it with one wet hand, and, still plying the towel on his cheeks, sauntered into the sitting room. Having advanced six steps and got the water out of his eyes, he lowered the towel.

THE young man, as Cristobal opened the door of the bedroom, had retreated to the center of the apartment, smiling expectantly. As Cristobal lowered the towel the smile vanished, and the young man took two quick nervous steps back towards the door at the stairhead, a flush of colour spreading over his face and dyeing his neck.

"Oh!" he ejaculated.

Cristobal, wiping his hands dry, looked at him enquiringly.

"Well?" said Cristobal.

"Sir!" said the young man.

"Well?" enquired Cristobal politely again.

"I thought — " said the young man. "I did not think — I expected — I did not expect — "

Cristobal, who had finished with the towel, pitched it back through the open bedroom door and buttoned up his shirt at the neck. He surveyed the young man's evident confusion.

"Come, we had better make another beginning," he said, with his usual good nature. "Good evening."

"Good evening," replied the lad opposite, who then stood dumb.

"Well?" said Cristobal, with what he felt was an admirable patience.

The handsome youth drew himself up with an air of the utmost hauteur.

"Sir," said he, "this room is engaged." Anything more freezing in tone and air Cristobal had never encountered.

Still, with the utmost good nature:

"I know it is," Cristobal replied.

"I repeat," said the youth in a most challenging tone, "that this room is engaged."

"And I repeat," said Cristobal in turn, with a slight hardening in tone and manner, "that I know it is."

"You know it?"

"Certainly. I engaged it."

"You?" The youth looked bewildered.

"I," said Cristobal.

"How?"

"I wrote — so I have been told."

"Been told!" The young man stared in pardonable astonishment. "But — surely you would have remembered writing?"

"One would have thought so?" returned Cristobal, "but evidently — " with a sigh of resignation — "my memory is not what it was."

The young man stood undecided for the space of some ten seconds, then, flushing again, and with a great hostility to his hauteur.

"Sir," said he, "be good enough to leave this room, and at once."

Cristobal surveyed him, still smiling, but in his smile there was now a quality faintly revealed that should have endangered prudence in the breast of any who faced him. He turned a sentence over under his tongue before he spoke.

"My little man," said he at length. "I have every consideration for the impetuosity of youth, but youth when it presumes is all the better for a sharp lesson now and then."

With nostrils expanded and a face turning white,

"You are insolent," exclaimed the young man.

Cristobal still smiled, but bleakly.

"In fact," he said, "if youth were not impressed from time to time with the value of prudence, youth would either grow up into very unmannerly manhood or — " he paused significantly, "it might even — never grow up at all."

The face of the young man paled.

"There is some mistake," he said at length in a low tone.

"Decidedly," agreed Cristobal, urbanely.

"If I am in error — "

Cristobal broke the ensuing pause.

"You are so much in error that I feel it my duty to read you a lesson. You have been addressing me in a style which I permit no one to use to me. You will therefore apologize — "

"I am willing," replied the youth, depression evident very subtly in his manner of standing, "to express regret for anything I may have said that — that — that is not warranted by — by — in short that I ought not to have said."

"That," responded Cristobal, "is a little vague, but I may be willing to accept it as sufficient, providing you explain to me how it comes that you are here at all."

("After all," he reflected, cheerfully, "this pretty boy is plainly in a devil of a fright already and has had all the lesson the occasion calls for.")

"No!" burst out the young man, with the greatest decision.

"You refuse?" Cristobal lifted his eyebrows.

"I refuse!" exclaimed the young man, with energy.

"A moment," said Cristobal. He turned his back stepped into the bedroom, picked up his tunic and threw it over his arm, found his rapier, drew it from its sheath and stepped back into the sitting room.

"I am sorry," he said, "but evidently there must be a lesson of this sort after all."

"What!" exclaimed the young man, "will you fight me?"

CRISTOBAL was implacable. In his heart a great pity endeavoured to urge its way to the front, but the provocation had been gross. Never in his life, thought Cristobal, had a Spanish gentleman been addressed in the fashion he himself had had to undergo.

"Will you explain?" he said, grimly.

"No," said the young man with a decision that almost touched fury.

"Then," Cristobal tapped the floor with his rapier point, "have your own way."

The youth drew a deep breath. He was appallingly white.

"Very well," he said, "very well — very well — " He put an undecided hand on his sword hilt, stared at Cristobal, then with an effort drew the blade and stepped back — well back — from his opponent.

Surveying him closely, for, swordsman as he was, he well knew that till blades have met and kissed no man should sum up his antagonist too lightly, Cristobal advanced steadily, blade extended in invitation. The youth on his part, standing his ground, kept his point lowered.

"I must tell you," he said, with apparent effort, "that I have been assured that I am the finest swordsman in all Spain."

Cristobal laughed a little.

"Within three seconds," he said, "you will know whether you were assured correctly or not."

"But — but — " said the young man, "I am kind-hearted — and if you would prefer it, you may leave here, unscathed."

"I thank you," said Cristobal politely, and with no more words advanced.

"You have my permission to retire," said the other, hastily, "and my assurance that my lips will be sealed on all that has passed."

"I am a thousand times your debtor," said Cristobal, still politely, but with a hint of sarcasm, "nevertheless I am filled with a longing to cross blades with the other finest swordsman in Spain.

"When we have finished with one another we shall know whose friends have spoken truly, and whose have but flattered. Come, sir!" He threw himself forward.

He got a surprising reception.

Without troubling to engage blades, the young man stepped nimbly in and delivered at Cristobal's face, not so much a lunge as a poke, which was with the greatest difficulty eluded, caught Cristobal a whack on the head with the flat of the blade, and then, leaping back as swiftly and lightly as a leaf in a whirlwind, dropped his point, panted painfully, hand on heart, and with an undeniable tear trickling from one of his large eyes, ejaculated, brokenly,

"Señor — I — I — Oh, Cristobal!"

Cristobal surveyed him in disdain. He had now fairly covered his face with one arm, and was weeping almost undisguisedly.

"What the devil's this?" asked Cristobal in astonishment. "Tears now! You sniveling young braggart, swaggering first, and then appealing to me!"

Desperately the young man faced him. His blade he dropped on the floor. He held out both hands appealingly. "Sir," he said, "if I must appeal to you — " He broke off, his lip quivered. "Oh, give me a moment," he pleaded.

Cristobal, his own point lowered, stared earnestly. There was a pause of some seconds.

"What's this?" said Cristobal, hesitatingly. The drooping figure opposite hung its head, covered its face with its hands, shrank away from him, feet shuffling undecidedly. . . . Its knees wavered, came close together. . . . The figure in the graceful and tasteful dress of a youth dropped into a chair by the table, fortunately close at hand.

All its manhood vanished, it rested its arms on the table and reposed its face on them. Every line of the figure, the fall of the black hair, the fragility of the shoulders, the delicacy of the hands proclaimed a fact so unmistakably, that Cristobal de Zaurigi stood aghast at his own blindness in having been deceived for a second.

# The Real Czarina

## By Julie Dehn

Madame Dehn was with the Imperial Family of Russia till their arrest at Tsarkoe-Selo. She was the intimate friend of them all and writes these memoirs from her home in England.

I WAS born on the beautiful estates in South Russia which belonged to my grandmother and my uncle. My father was Ismail Selim Bek Smolsky, whose ancestors hailed from Lithuanian Tartary, and my mother, before her marriage was Mlle. Catharine Horvat, whose grandfather had been invited by the Empress Elizabeth Petrovna to come from Hungary and assist in the colonization of South Russia.

When I was a child, the peasants were on the best of terms with my family, and they regarded my grandmother Horvat as a beneficent deity who replaced the reed roofs when they were destroyed by fire, and who supplied them with unlimited quantities of fuel. They were quite contented, and my grandmother still employed some of the peasants who had once been given to her as serfs.

I never went to school. My first tutor was a priest, but as I hardly knew Russian, (we always spoke French at home) and he knew no French, I made little progress: afterwards Miss Rip, an English governess, took me in hand, but I think she looked upon us as very much behind the times.

While I was still a young girl, the dissaffection in Russia was already well on the way to Revolution. In 1905 when I was staying with one of my uncles in Livadia who had charge of the Emperor's estates at Tanoff, we were not left long in ignorance as to the methods which were employed by the Revolutionary Agents. It is now well known that most of the seeds of Revolution were sown at Tanoff, but it was dreadful to see the boats smothered in red flags, and to hear the Marseillaise sung defiantly from the water, since my uncle had prohibited all political meetings on land.

One day I persuaded my cousins to visit the ruins of Orianda. It was a forbidden expedition, but we considered the possible results of our disobedience would be amply compensated for by the mysteries of the underground passages, which we at once began to explore. As we neared the end of one of these the sound of distant voices broke the stillness, and, terrified out of our wits, we did not know whether to beat a retreat, or to dare all, and discover whence the sound proceeded. Curiosity conquered cowardice, and we crept cautiously along, until the darkness was lit up by the glow of a large fire. Thinking that we had now reached the entrance to the Infernal Regions, we turned, and fled precipitately; and, risking punishment, described the whereabouts of Hell to my uncle. And Hell, in a way, it

proved to be, as it was discovered that secret printing presses existed underground, and that most of the evil propaganda had emanated from Orianda.

My attention was soon to be diverted from rebellion and punishment. Shortly afterwards I went with my grandmother to Petrograd, where my marriage was arranged, in fact, I was already engaged when I was presented at Court. My fiancé was Captain Charles Dehn, of Swedish descent, whose ancestors had come into the northern Provinces at the time of the Crusades, and the members of whose family were mostly Generals, or Officers in the Service of the State. Captain Dehn had taken part in quelling the Boxer Rebellion, and at the Siege of Pekin he was the first Officer to scale the walls of the Forbidden City, in defence of the Embassies. For this service, he received the Order of St. George, (the Russian Victoria Cross), and the Order of the Legion of Honour was awarded him by the Ambassadors of the various nations represented in Pekin.

On his arrival at Petrograd he was presented to the Emperor, who appointed him an Officer on the *Standart* and an Officer of the Mixed Guard, whose members were chosen from various regiments, and many of whom were honoured by the personal friendship of the Emperor.

Captain Dehn was a great favourite with the little Czarevitch and the Grand Duchesses, and he used to play with them in their nurseries, his nickname with the children being "Pekin Dehn." Both the Emperor and the Empress manifested the greatest interest in his engagement, and the Empress intimated to my grandmother that she wished to make my personal acquaintance. We waited in Petrograd for a month, before we were received by the Empress. The Grand Duchess Anastasie was ill with diphtheria, and the Empress was nursing her at the Alexandria Palace, Peterhof, where, until all danger of infection had passed, she had isolated herself from other members of the Imperial family.

How well I remember that first meeting with one whom I was to love so devotedly, and whose constant friendship has been one of my greatest joys. One summer morning in July, my grandmother and I arrived at the Station at Peterhof, where my fiancé, and a Court carriage were awaiting us. I was literally trembling with terror, and I was too excited even to notice Charles!

We duly reached the Alexandria Palace, but as the Empress was still nervous about infection, it had been arranged that my presentation should take place in the Winter Garden attached to the Palace. We were received at the Palace by the Mistress of the Household, Princess Golitzin, who was exactly like an old picture, and whose adherence to régime made everyone dread being guilty of the smallest lapse of etiquette! But she was very kind and gracious to us, and I felt somehow that my simple white gown from Bressac's, and my rose-trimmed hat had met with her approval. We walked through the Park and passed on with the Princess to the Winter Garden, a lovely tropical place, full of flowers and palms. It was exactly like a Garden of Dreams, at least I thought so, until I saw the prosaically comfortable garden chairs, and noticed some toys, and a child's dolls' house. Then I decided that this beautiful Garden must be real!

At last advancing slowly through the masses of greenery, came a tall and slender figure. It was the Empress! I looked at her, admiration in my heart, and in my eyes. I had never imagined her half so fair. And I shall never forget her beauty as I saw her on that July morning, although the Empress of many sorrows remains with me more as a pathetic and holy memory.

The Empress was dressed entirely in white, with a thin white veil draped round her hat. Her complexion was delicately fair, but when she was excited her cheeks were suffused with a faint rose flush. Her hair was reddish gold, her eyes, those infinitely tragic eyes, were dark blue, and her figure was as supple as a willow wand. I remember that her pearls were magnificent, and that diamond earrings flashed coloured fires whenever she moved her head. She wore a simple little ring bearing the emblem of the Swastika.

Directly Princess Golitzin had left us alone, the Empress extended her hand for my grandmother and me to kiss, then, with a sweet smile, and a world of kindness in her eyes — "Sit down," she said, and turning to Captain Dehn, "When is the marriage to take place?" she enquired.

My nervousness had vanished: I was no longer afraid, in fact it was the Empress who seemed shy, but she was, I found later, always shy with strangers, a trait peculiar to her and to her cousin the Princess Royal, Duchess of Fife. However this excessive shyness was not accounted as shyness in Petrograd, it was called German superciliousness!

Our interview lasted well over half an hour. The Empress spoke French to my grandmother and me, she made no attempt to converse in German; then she rose to say good-bye, and we kissed hands. "I shall see you again very soon," she repeated, "be sure you let me know when you return."

I went back to Petrograd almost beside myself with happiness. I felt instinctively that I had found a friend, someone I could love, and who, I dared hope, might love me!

As a young married woman, blest with many kind relations and friends, it was not long before I took my place in Petrograd Society.

The great enlivenments of the season after the Japanese War, were the Charity Bazaars. The Grand Duchess Marie always organized one in the Assemblée de la Noblesse, a huge building, where an ultra smart throng of Society leaders sold all kinds of pretty and expensive trifles.

The Empress had her own table at the Assemblée de la Noblesse, and I sold at it once.

Almost immediately after my arrival at Tsarkoe-Selo, I made the acquaintance of Anna Virouboff. Anna was one of those beings who always look as if someone has hurt them; one wanted to "mother" Anna, to amuse her, to hear her confidences and to laugh at her exaggerated joys and sorrows. Four years after her marriage, Anna met with a train-accident. She never again walked without crutches, her body was completely deformed, but even then slander did not spare her, evil tongues in Petrograd asserted that, as well as being the friend of the Empress, Anna Virouboff was the mistress of the Emperor!

One Monday shortly after my marriage, I received a note from Anna, asking me to dine with her that evening. Captain Dehn had been in Petrograd for several days, and as I was rather lonely, I was glad

to accept. The dinner was very gay, several officers had been invited, and Emma Fredericks, the daughter of the Minister of the Court, was also a guest. At half past nine, we heard the sound of wheels, and a carriage stopped outside the house. Anna instantly left the salon, and a few minutes after, the door opened, and to our astonishment, the Emperor, the Empress and the Grand-Duchesses entered. They were all laughing as this surprise visit had been arranged by the Empress.

This was the first occasion on which I had spoken to His Majesty, and I found him as charming and friendly as the Empress. His kind eyes and his smile struck me at once, he seemed to move in an aura of goodwill, and his peculiar fascinating charm of manner has been admitted even by his enemies, as M. Kerensky acknowledged that the Emperor possessed one of the noblest natures he ever met!

*The Czarina in court costume*

After my meeting with the Emperor at Anna's house, I often went to Tsarkoe-Selo, and the Grand-Duchesses and I used to ride on the wooden switchback which was set up in one part of the Palace. It was tremendous fun, and we slid and played together for hours, but I quite forgot that I was a married woman and that I had hopes of becoming a mother in some months' time. However the Empress had some idea of my condition, and one day after she and Anna had been watching our performance on the switchback, Anna drew me aside.

"Lili," she said. "I've a message for you. The Empress wants you to be very careful just now." She held up a playful finger. "So no more switchback!!"

During the months which followed, the Empress manifested the greatest kindness towards me. She insisted upon her own doctor attending me. At the first christening, Lutheran, the Empress attended in person, and held the baby, now known as Alexander Leonide. She gave me a beautiful sapphire and diamond brooch, and all kinds of presents, and for seven years the question of the child's religion was never mooted between us But at the end of that time, the Empress told me that her dearest wish was that "Titi" (as she called him) should be received into the Greek Church.

"It is more than a wish, Lili," she said earnestly, "it is a command. I insist upon my godson being Orthodox. He must be baptized before Christmas."

She told me that she had hesitated to accept the Emperor's offer of marriage until she felt that her conscience would allow her to do so, and she could say with truth — "Thy country shall be my country, thy people my people, and thy God my God."

Titi's second baptism took place during the war at the St. Theodor Cathedral, and was an orthodox Greek Church ceremonial.

After the service we went back to the Palace, and the Empress displayed more emotion than she had done at the first christening. I could see how deeply the religious question had affected her all these years. She told me how relieved she was, how pleased, how she felt now that all was well with the child, and she gave her godson a wonderful Ikon of St. Alexander, and a cross engraved with her initials. The Empress was always sweet with Titi. She adored children and she often came to my house, when she petted the baby, and whistled to him. This amused her, and she declared that Titi knew her whistle and always opened his eyes whenever he heard it. I remember that one morning after the Lutheran baptism, the Empress paid me a surprise visit.

"I've come to see the baby," she said. "Let me go to the nursery and fetch him."

I followed her upstairs, and she took Titi out of his cot and carried him to the drawing-room, where she played with him for an hour, sitting on the carpet to do so.

I think I am right in saying that our affectionate friendship began from the birth of Titi. It was then that the Empress first called me "Lili," and as "Lili" I caused much mystification during the Revolution, when this signature was supposed to possess some cryptic meaning.

The Imperial Family spent part of that year in Finland, whither my husband accompanied them, and I and the baby went to stay with his parents. I was at Petrograd during the winter, I saw a great deal of the Imperial Family, and learned to love them all. They led the simplest of lives; it was a real "vie de famille," the life which appealed to them as individuals, but not the life which appealed to the smart world with which the Empress had so little in common.

And now I feel I must speak of the real Czarina, the Empress whose personality is known to so few, the Czarina who was the most misjudged and unfortunate of human beings.

The Emperor was the love of her life. She told me herself that he was her first love, but the greater her love, the greater her fear lest she would prove unworthy. She gave herself to Russia when she married, and she accepted Russia as a sacred trust, but she and the Emperor were always more husband and wife than Emperor and Empress — they lived the intimate life of happily married people, they liked simplicity, they shrank from publicity, and this love of retirement was

the source of many of the evil reports which assailed the Imperial Family. She had been taught to be careful: she *was* careful.

"When I was engaged, Lili, I showed my grandmother (Queen Victoria) some of the jewels which the Emperor had given me. What do you think she said?"

"I can't imagine, Madame."

"Well. . . . she looked at my diamonds and remarked — 'Now, Alix, don't get too proud!' "

The occultism of the Empress was grossly exaggerated. What superstition she had was of the most trivial description: she thought that a bright day was propitious for a journey, that the gift of an Ikon to her was not propitious, and her fancy for the sign of the Swastika was not for the Swastika as a *charm*, but as a symbol. She told me that the ancients believed in the Swastika as the source of motion, the emblem of Divinity. The significance of it as a "luck bringer" never crossed her mind. "Faith, Love and Hope are *all* that matter," she would say. I will readily admit that she possessed a strong element of mysticism which coloured much of her life; this was akin to the "dreaming" propensities of her grandfather, the Prince Consort of England. The environment and the Faith of her adoption fostered this mystic sense.

*Emperor Nicholas—the Czar of Russia*

The Empress was an early riser. She had six dressers, but she took her bath unassisted, and slipped on a Japanese Kimono of silk or printed cotton over her undergarments, when she was ready to have her hair arranged.

The Empress was extraordinarily modest in her disarray; in this, the Victorian influence was again discernible, as her conception of the bedroom was a la mode de Windsor and Buckingham Palace in 1840. She did not countenance the filmy and theatrical, either in her lingerie or in her sleeping apartment; her underwear was of the finest linen, beautifully embroidered, but otherwise plain. Her red-gold hair was never touched with curling irons, and it was usually very simply dressed, except when great State functions called for a more elaborate coiffure.

The bedroom of the Emperor and the Empress was a large room with two tall windows opening on to the Park. It was on the ground floor, as, owing to the Empress's heart complaint, she found the exertion of ascending any stairs very exhausting. A lift in the corridor communicated with the nurseries.

A large double bed made of lightish wood was near the windows, between which stood the Empress's dressing-table. At the right of the bed was a little door in the wall, leading to a tiny dark chapel lighted by hanging lamps, where the Empress was wont to pray. This chapel contained a table, and a praying stand, on which were a Bible and an Ikon of Christ. This Ikon was afterwards given to me by Her Majesty, in memory of the days which we spent together at Tsarkoe-Selo.

The furniture in the Imperial bedroom was in flowered tapestry, and the carpet was a plain coloured soft pile. The Emperor's dressing-room was separated from the bedroom by the corridor and on the other side were the Empress's dressing room and bathroom — but, alas! for her rumoured extravagances and her "odd" fancies! The bathroom was no luxurious place of silver and marble, but an old-fashioned bath set in a dark recess in the wall, and the Empress, with her Victorian love of neatness insisted that the bath be hidden.

Her gowns, except those worn by her on State occasions, were very simple; she liked blouses and skirts, and she was greatly addicted to tea-gowns: her taste in dress was as sensible as that of Queen Mary of England; like her, she disapproved strongly of exaggerated fashions, and I shall not easily forget her condemnation when I once came to see her wearing a "hobble" skirt.

"Do you really like this skirt, Lili?" asked the Empress.

"Well. . . Madame," I said helplessly, "c'est la mode."

"It is no use whatever as a skirt," she answered. "Now, Lili, prove to me that it is comfortable — run, Lili, run, and let me see how fast you can cover the ground in it."

Needless to say, I never wore a "hobble" skirt again.

The Empress has been accused of a mania for precious stones. I never saw any signs of it: true, she had quantities of magnificent jewels, but these possessions were consequent upon her position as Empress. She was fond of rings and bracelets, and she always wore a certain ring set with one immense pearl, and a jeweled cross. Some writers assert that this cross was set with emeralds, but I do not agree. I am sure that the stones were sapphires, and as I saw it every day, I fancy I am correct. The Empress had soft, well-shaped hands, but they were neither small nor useless hands, and she never had her nails polished, as the Emperor detested highly polished and super-manicured nails.

At nine o'clock, the Empress breakfasted with the Emperor, it was a simple meal à l'Anglaise, and after breakfast she went upstairs to see the children. Then Anna Virouboff arrived, and if certain interviews were imperative, these were usually given during the morning, but if the Empress found herself "free", she went to inspect her training college for domestic nurses, which was arranged entirely on English lines. She had great faith in the value of English-trained nurses for children, and she put all her usual "thoroughness" into the working and management of this institution.

Lunch was at one o'clock, and at twelve-thirty on Sundays, but when, as it often happened, the Empress was indisposed, she either lunched in her boudoir, or alone with the Czarevitch. After lunch the Empress walked, or drove herself in a little open carriage. Tea was at five, but sometimes receptions were held between lunch and tea. The Imperial Family all met at tea, which was quite "en famille". Dinner, which was at 8 o'clock, was often a moveable feast in the literal sense of the word. The Emperor disliked dining in one special room, so a table was carried to whichever room he happened to fancy that evening. Dinner over (and it was a very simple dinner), the Imperial Family spent the remainder of the evening together: the Grand-Duchesses, who had a flair for puzzles, usually indulged in puzzle-making: sometimes the Emperor read aloud whilst his daughters and their mothers worked. It was the homely life of a united family — but a life with which the great world was not in sympathy. It was the Empress' choice. As a woman she was right, as an Empress perhaps she was wrong. The Imperial pair wished to lead the lives of private individuals; they imagined that it was possible.

In Russia it has never been popular or possible for a Czar to be human: He was an emblem, a representative of crystallized traditions; he united in himself the rôles of the Father of His People, and the splendid, All-Conquering, unapproachable Czar. An Emperor or an Empress in mufti, so to speak, never yet appealed to popular imagination, and just as the English cottager preserved and venerated the horrible "royal" oleographs of Queen Victoria, so did the Russian peasant venerate similar oleographs of the Emperor and his consort. Neither cottager nor peasant would have understood or cared to possess "family" photographs of their rulers. Popular imagination has ever been appealed to by scarlet and ermine, golden crowns, and kingly sceptres. It doesn't understand or value anything else.

My friendship with the Empress increased as the months passed. That Autumn the Imperial Family went to Livadia, and I stayed with my uncle, going constantly to and from the Palace. The first day I saw the Empress in Livadia, she gave me an entire layette for Titi which she had made herself. I had wondered why she had telegraphed for his measurement, now I knew —. She would often call at my uncle's and take the baby with her for a drive, the little thing got to know her well, and one day, looking at her photograph, he said "Baby", so after this the Empress of Russia was known to Titi by her own wish, *tout simplement*, in English, as "Aunt Baby". He always called her "Aunt Baby", and in many of her letters she alludes to herself by this pet name, but needless to say, the favour shown to me and my child by the Imperial Family was the source of much comment at Court.

On one point my mind was made up. I determined never to allow any ideas of preferment or material advantage to spoil what was to me a condition of great happiness. My husband entirely agreed — and he declined to consider any mention of the posts which were from time to time, spoken of in connection with him. As for myself, the Empress understood, and appreciated my outlook. "You can always be my *friend* if matters remain as they are," she said. "I don't want to lose my Lili in an Official Personage."

We were very happy in those days; the Grand-Duchesses were fast leaving childhood behind them and blossoming into charming girls: they did not greatly resemble one another, each was a type apart, but all were equally lovely in disposition.

The Grand-Duchess Olga was the eldest of these four, fair, sisters. She was a most amiable girl, and people loved her from the moment they set eyes on her. As a child she was plain, at fifteen she was beautiful. She was slightly above middle height, with a fresh complexion, deep blue eyes, quantities of light, chestnut hair, and pretty hands and feet; she took life seriously and she was a clever girl with a sweet disposition. I think she possessed unusual strength of character, and at one time she was mentioned as a possible bride for the Crown Prince of Roumania. But the Grand-Duchess did not like him, and as the Crown Prince liked the Grand-Duchess Marie better than her sister, nothing came of the project.

The Grand-Duchess Tatiana was as charming as her Sister Olga, but in a different way. She has been described as proud, but I never knew anyone less so. With her, as with her mother, shyness and reserve were accounted as pride, but once you knew her and had gained her affection, this reserve disappeared, and the real Tatiana became apparent. She was a poetical creature, always yearning for the ideal, and dreaming of great friendships which might be hers. The Emperor loved her devotedly, they had much in common, and the sisters used to laugh, and say that if a favour were required, "Tatiana must ask Papa to grant it." She was very tall, and excessively thin, with a cameo-like profile, deep blue eyes, and dark chestnut hair . . . . . a lovely "rose" maiden, fragile and pure as a flower.

All the Grand-Duchesses were innocent children in their souls. Nothing impure was ever allowed to come into their lives, the Empress was very strict over the books which they read, which were always by English authors. They had no idea of the ugly side of life, although, poor girls, they were destined to see the worst side of it and to come in contact with the most debased passions of humanity.

The governess, Mlle. Tutcheff, did not hesitate to spread all kinds of vindictive rumours to account for her dismissal. She was too small-minded to state the real facts, and, as l'affaire Rasputin was generally spoken about, she decided to vent her spite on the Empress through this medium.

When I first knew the Grand-Duchess Marie, she was quite a child, but during the Revolution she became very devoted to me, and I to her, and we spent most of our time together — she was a wonderful girl, possessed of tremendous reserve force, and I never realized her unselfish nature until those dreadful days. She, too, was exceedingly fair, dowered with the classic beauty of the Romanoffs: her eyes were dark blue, shaded by long lashes, and she had masses of dark brown hair. Marie was plump, and the Empress often teased her about this: she was not so lively as her sisters, but

*The Czarina and the Czarévitch, Alexis*

she was much more decided in her outlook. The Grand-Duchess Marie knew at once what she wanted, and why she wanted it.

Anastasie, the youngest Grand-Duchess, might have been composed of quicksilver, instead of flesh and blood: she was most amusing, and she was a very clever mimic. She saw the humorous side of everything, and she was very fond of acting: indeed Anastasie would have made an excellent comedy actress. She was always in mischief, a regular tom-boy, but she was not backward in her development, as M. Tilliar has stated. Anastasie was only sixteen at the time of the Revolution — no great age after all! She was pretty, but hers was more of a "clever" face, and her eyes were wells of intelligence.

All the sisters were utterly devoid of pride, and when they nursed the wounded during the war, they were known as The Sisters Romanoff, and they answered to the numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4.

The Grand-Duchesses occupied two bedrooms: Olga and Tatiana shared one, Marie and Anastasie the other. These apartments were large and light, decorated and furnished in green and white. The sisters slept on camp beds — a custom dating back to the reign of Alexander I, who decreed that the daughters of the Emperor were not to sleep on more comfortable beds until they married. Ikons hung in the corners of the rooms, and there were pretty dressing tables and couches with embroidered cushions. The Grand Duchesses were fond of pictures and photographs — there were endless snapshots taken by themselves, those from their beloved Crimea being especially in evidence.

A large room, divided by a curtain, served as dressing room and bathroom for the Grand Duchesses. One half of the room was full of cupboards, and in the other half stood the large bath of solid silver.

The Grand-Duchesses had departed from their mother's simple ideas, and when they bathed at night, the water was perfumed and softened with almond bran.

The Grand-Duchesses liked their attendants, and often used to help them tidy the rooms and make the beds! Unlike their mother, but like most Russians, the four sisters showed a predilection for dress, but the Empress had her own ideas on the subject, and she chose and ordered all their clothes. As children, the girls were dressed alike, but later the two eldest wore similar gowns and the next two were dressed, so to speak, "to match." The only frivolity which the Empress tolerated, lay in her daughters' dressing-gowns, which carried out the colours of the regiments of which they were colonels — and the Grand-Duchesses were very proud of their dressing-gowns and their regiments. They were always present at parades, when they wore the uniforms of their regiments and this excitement was one of their chief pleasures.

The Grand-Duchesses rose early, and were soon occupied with their lessons. After morning lessons they walked with the Emperor, and between lunch and tea, they again went out with him. They spoke Russian, English, or a little French, *never* German, and although they danced well, they had not much chance to do so, unless the Imperial Family went to the Crimea, when Princess Marie Bariatinsky always arranged a series of dances for them.

The Czarevitch, that Child of many Prayers, one of the most pathetic figures in this tragedy of innocence, was born in 1905, and he was a healthy baby weighing eleven pounds at the time of his birth. The stories about his delicacy of constitution which have been given to the world are exaggerated.

The Czarevitch suffered only from the hereditary trouble of the blood-vessels, which first became apparent after a fall in Spala, but he was otherwise a normally healthy boy, and at the time of the Revolution he was really getting much stronger and much freer from the complaint. I know he was ailing at Tobolsk and Ekaterinburg, but that is hardly to be wondered at!

In appearance he resembled his sister Tatiana: he had the same fine features and her beautiful blue eyes: he loved his sisters, and they adored him, and patiently submitted to his teasing. The Czarevitch was a lively, amusing boy, with a wonderful ear for music, and he played well on the Balalika: like Tatiana he was shy, but once he knew and liked anyone, this shyness vanished.

The Empress insisted upon her son being brought up, like his sisters, in a perfectly natural way. There was no ceremonial in the daily life of the Czarevitch: he was merely a son, and a brother to his family, although it was sometimes quaint to see him assume "grown up" airs. One day when he was indulging in a romp with the Grand-Duchesses, he was told that some officers of his regiment had arrived at the Palace, and begged permission to be received by him. The Czarevitch instantly ceased his game, and calling his sisters, said very gravely: "Now, girls, run away. I am busy. Someone has just called to see me on business."

The motive power in the lives of these charming children was family love. They had no thoughts apart from their home. With the "children," as we called them, it was always a question of "would Papa like it?" "Do you think this or that would please Mama?" — they always alluded to their father and mother by the simple Russian words of Mama and Papa.

The Czarevitch adored his mother, and her passionate devotion to him is world-known, although like many other things, this devotion has been used as a weapon against her. To the Empress, he represented the direct result of prayer, the divine condescension of God, the crowning joy of her marriage. Surely if she manifested undue anxiety over him, she only did what all mothers have done, and will do, until the end of time. There was certainly some subtle sympathy between mother and son: she was all that was lovely and beloved to him, and I especially remembered one typical instance of this devotion.

My husband and I had been dining with the Imperial Family and after dinner, the Emperor suggested that we should accompany them to the Czarevitch's bedroom, as the Empress always went thither to bid him good night and hear him say his prayers. It was a pretty sight to watch the child and his mother, and listen to his simple prayers, but when the Empress rose to go, we suddenly found ourselves in complete darkness — the Czarevitch had switched off the electric light over his bed!!

"Why have you done this, Baby?" asked the Empress.

"Oh," answered the child, "it's only light for me, Mama, when you are here. It's always quite dark when you have gone."

He loved his father, and the Emperor's great wish in the "happy days" was to undertake his son's education himself: this, for many reasons, was impossible, and Mr. Gibbs and M. Tilliar were his first tutors. Later, under very different conditions, the Emperor was enabled to carry out his wish. In the gloomy house at Tobolsk, he taught the Czarevitch, and in the squalor and misery of Ekaterinburg, the lessons still continued.

The Czarevitch had various playmates — all sorts and conditions of boys shared his games; there were the two sons of his sailor-servant, two peasant boys with whom he was on friendly and affectionate terms, and my "Titi," who ran about with him upsetting everything, and thoroughly enjoying himself. The Heir to the Throne was as courteous as his sisters. One day the Empress and I were sitting in the Mauve Boudoir, when we heard the excited voices of the Czarevitch and Titi in the next room.

"I believe they're quarrelling," said the Empress, and she went to the door, and listened to what the children were saying. Then she turned to me laughing. "Why, they're not quarreling, Lili. Alexis is insisting that Titi shall come into the Mauve Room first, and the good Titi won't hear of it!"

If the Czarevitch had any peculiarities, I think the most striking was a decided penchant for hoarding. Many descendants of the Coburgs have been unusually thrifty, and perhaps the Czarevitch inherited this trait. Although kind-hearted, I cannot truthfully describe him as being a generous child: he hoarded his things to such an extent that the Emperor often teased him unmercifully, but he was at heart quite unselfish, and during the sugar shortage he saved his allowance of sugar which he gravely distributed among his friends. He was fond of animals and his spaniel "Toy" has happily found a home in England: his chief pet at Tsarkoe was an ugly, sandy and white kitten, which he once brought from G. H. Q. This kitten he christened Zoubrovka, and bestowed a collar and a bell on it as a signal mark of affection. "Zoubrovka" was no

respecter of palaces, and he used to wage war with the Grand-Duchess Tatiana's bull-dog "Artipo," and light-heartedly overthrow all the family photographs in the Czarina's boudoir. But "Zoubrovka" was a privileged kitten, and I have often wondered what became of him when the Imperial Family were taken to Tobolsk.

All the children were fond of animals. The Grand-Duchess Marie favoured a Siamese cat, and the year before the Revolution Anna Virouboff gave a little Pekinese dog to the Grand-Duchess Anastasie. This little creature had a tragic history. He was a sweet little creature, whose tiny legs were so short that he could not walk up or down stairs. The Grand-Duchess Anastasie always carried him, and "Jimmi" lavished a Pekinese devotion on her and her sisters.

"Jimmi" went with the family to Tobolsk, and he is now identified in history with their tragic fate.

Both the Emperor and Empress disliked the Kaiser. I say this with perfect sincerity, and in all truth. They rarely mentioned his name before the War, and I know that his love of theatrical display appealed to neither of them. The Emperor William's yacht once happened to be in the Shker at the same time as the *Standart* and after the Kaiser had paid a formal call on the Emperor, signals passed between the two yachts.

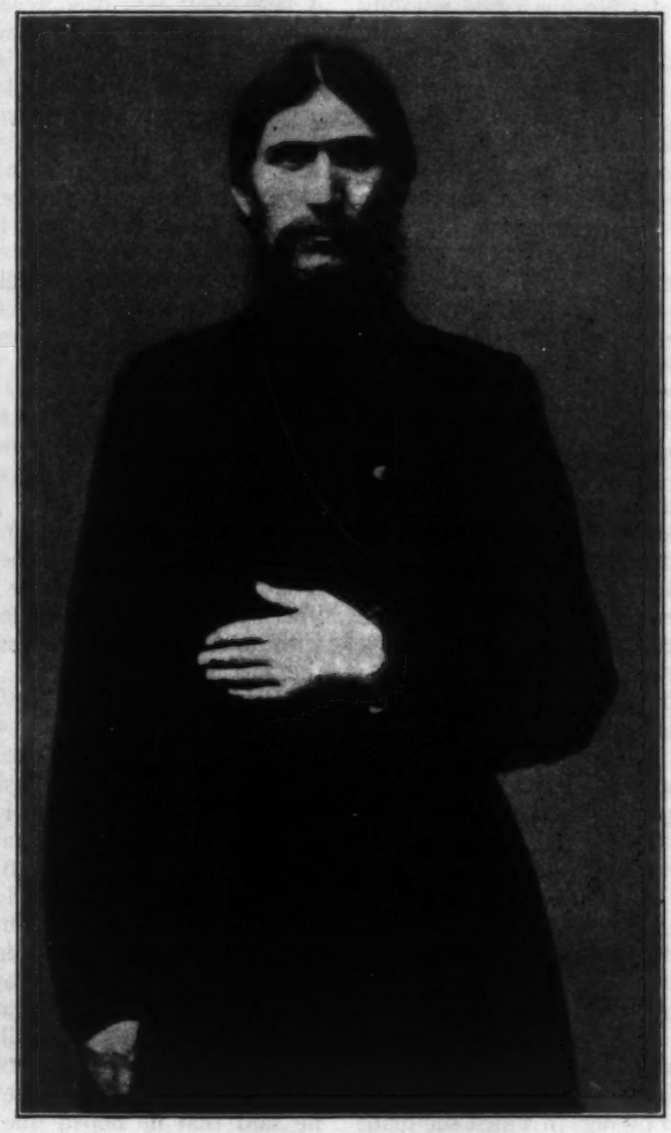
"What's all this?" asked the Emperor.

An officer enlightened him.

"Your Majesty," said he; "the signal from the *Hohenzollern* says, 'The Emperor of the Atlantic salutes the Emperor of the Pacific.' "

The Emperor looked cross.

"Oh, that's it — well, then you may reply 'Thank you' — that's quite enough."



*Gregori Rasputin*

I am going to write of Gregori Rasputin as I knew him. If I say that I never saw his evil side I shall be called a liar or a fool — perhaps, more chivalrously the latter. It is, however, the truth, when I say that we never saw the evil side of him.

Gregori Rasputin arrived in Petrograd from Siberia on a pilgrimage, walking the entire way with irons on his body in order to make his progress more painful and difficult.

If a pilgrim were to arrive in London from Edinburgh in similar circumstances, he would be taken before a magistrate, and most probably sent to a lunatic asylum; these things do not happen in England, but they were of daily occurrence in Russia. We were so accustomed to the miraculous that I do not think the average Russian would have manifested any surprise if he had been accosted in the street by the Angel Gabriel!!

Rasputin had been introduced by certain people to Germogen, a priest and a friend of Elidor, who possessed great influence in the region of the Volga. Elidor's dominant idea was to found a particular sect of his own, but he failed to do so, and he was ultimately dismissed from authority.

At this time the Empress saw Rasputin occasionally, but he was chiefly to be found in the company of the two Grand-Duchesses, the Tzar, who had "discovered" him, and who now reported that Rasputin was undoubtedly a "seer." This annoyed the Emperor, and the next time he saw Rasputin, he asked him to tell him *how* he "saw" true.

"Your Majesty, I know nothing of Clairvoyancy," said Rasputin.

"Then why have the Grand-Duchesses asserted that you possess clairvoyant gifts?" replied the Emperor crossly, and when the Empress put the same question to Rasputin, she received the same reply.

The real reason for this report will never be known, it was in all probability political, but after Rasputin had disowned Clairvoyancy, the two Grand-Duchesses disowned their protegé, and sided with Germogen against him. The commencement of endless intrigues dates from this period, as Elidor and Germogen were afraid that Rasputin would become more important than themselves. And so they plotted his complete downfall.

I must now deal with Rasputin's alleged influence over the Empress. There is no doubt that her subconscious belief in his spiritual powers was confirmed by the long arm of coincidence. The Czarevitch fell ill, the attack was severe and his parents were frantic. If any mother with an only son reads these pages, she will admit that the word "frantic" best describes the feelings of a mother at such a crisis. The Empress was literally beside herself: it was then that someone suggested that Rasputin should be sent for. When he arrived he bade the despairing parents Hope — he prayed by the bedside of the Czarevitch, and it seemed that directly he did so the child began to get better.

I had met Rasputin but once. I had gone to his

"eyrie" with Anna Virouboff to consult with him, but I had neither liked nor trusted him, nor had I followed his advice.

My second meeting with him took place in the winter. Titi was seriously ill, it was thought that diphtheric conditions would set in, and the poor little boy lay tossing from side to side in delirium. Anna 'phoned.

"Lili — " she said, "my advice is — ask Gregory to come and pray."

I hesitated — I knew my husband's distaste for anything touching the supernatural. But when I saw how ill Titi was I capitulated. No one could possibly condemn the prayers offered for a sick child. Rasputin arrived with an old woman dressed as a nun. This quaint creature refused to enter the boy's bedroom, and sat on the stairs praying.

"Don't wake Titi," I whispered as we entered the nursery. Rasputin made no reply, but sat down by the bedside and looked long and intently at the sleeper. He then knelt and prayed. Rising from his knees he bent over Titi.

"Don't wake him," I repeated.

"Silence — *I must.*"

Rasputin placed a finger on either side of Titi's nose. The child instantly awoke, looked at the stranger unafraid, addressed him by the playful name which Russian children give to old people. Rasputin talked to him, and Titi told him that his head ached "ever so badly."

"Never mind," said Rasputin, his steel eyes full of strange lights. Then addressing me. "To-morrow thy child will be well. Let me know if this is not so." And bidding us farewell he departed with his odd escort. After this I saw him whenever he came to the Palace — on an average, about once a month.

It is only fair to Rasputin to say that he derived no material benefits from these visits, in fact he once complained to me that he was never even given his cab-fares!!

When various people reproached the Empress for being on terms of friendship with a common peasant, and for believing that he was endowed with the attributes of holiness, she replied that Our Lord did not choose well born members of Jewish society for his followers. All his disciples except St. Luke were men of humble origin. I am inclined to think that she placed Rasputin on a level with St. John. . . . both were, in her opinion, mystics.

The first grave scandal which assailed the Empress in connection with Rasputin, was the discovery and publication of a letter written by her, in which she made use of the expression: *"Je veux reposer mon âme auprès de vous."* (I wish to rest my soul on you.) The enemies of Rasputin were fully aware that he was guilty of the fatal habit of keeping interesting letters, so Rasputin (always desirous of popularity) was invited to meet certain influential people. During the rendezvous, Gregory was attacked by Iliodore and Germogen and robbed and all the correspondence which he carried on him was stolen.

In due time the contents of the Empress's letter were published, and this did her tremendous harm. Even the Duma took the worst view of the much quoted sentence. But this expression was not used at all in the physical meaning. The Empress merely wished to tell her friend that her soul was desirous of spiritual consolation.

Rasputin always had a presentiment of a violent death. "Whilst I'm alive, all will be well, but after my death, rivers of blood will flow. Nothing, however, will happen to 'Father' and 'Mother' " (Emperor and Empress).

Everyone who loved the Imperial Family was horrified at the ever increasing scandals, but it was impossible to persuade the Empress that popular feeling was against her. She heard what was said, she read what was imputed to her, but she paid no attention to gossip or to mendacious paragraphs. She was obsessed by her religion. In the summer of 1916 she sent Anna Virouboff and me on a pilgrimage to Tobolsk in Siberia. A new Saint had been recently canonized at Tobolsk, and the Empress had made a vow to go thither herself or to send a substitute. Anna asked me to consent as she was afraid to travel alone, and as the Empress begged me to go, I could do no less than prove my devotion to her wishes. At Petrograd I discovered that Rasputin was to travel with us. It was most ill-advised but I dared not suggest this.

We left Petrograd in the greatest publicity. . . . A special saloon carriage was attached to the train. It was a progress of publicity. . . . wires were sent in advance all along the line to announce our advent, and crowds thronged the stations to catch a glimpse of us.

Late in the evening we arrived at Tumen, and from thence we took the steamer to Tobolsk. Little did I dream, that in a year's time, the Imperial Family were to make the same pilgrimage — of which the whole journey was to prove indeed a Via Dolorosa! They, too, were to see the black and swiftly flowing river, and the wild Tartar villages on its banks, and, like myself, they were to see the city on the mountain, with its churches and houses sharply silhouetted against the fast darkening sky.

We were received at Tobolsk by the Governor, the chief officials, and the Church dignitary, Varnava, and we were afterwards taken to our quarters in the Governor's house, where I slept in the little room which the Emperor, a year later, used as his study. The next day we visited the Saint's grave, and attended a very impressive service in the Cathedral. Rasputin stayed with the priest, but he quarreled with Varnava, and I was not sorry when our visit came to an end. On the way back to Tumen, Rasputin made a point of us stopping at his village, and seeing his wife. I saw the dark grey carved wooden house which was the home of Rasputin. The village consisted of a group of small wooden houses built on two floors. Rasputin's house was, perhaps, a little larger than the others, and he said that he hoped one day their Majesties would visit him.

"But it's too far," I said aghast.

Rasputin was angry. "They *must*," he declared, and, a few minutes afterwards he added the prophetic words: "Willing or unwilling, they will come to Tobolsk. They will see my village before they die."

As we had decided to go on to Ekaterinburg and from thence to the Convent of Verchotouria, I tried to persuade Rasputin to remain with his people. This he refused to do; I told Anna that there must be no more gossip and that she must persuade Rasputin to leave us. She promised to do so, but at the last moment he went with us to Ekaterinburg.

I shall never forget my first impression of this fatal town. Directly we got out of the train, I felt

a sense of calamity. Rasputin was ill at ease, Anna perceptibly nervous, and I was heartily glad when we reached the Convent of Verchotouria. The Hermit lived in the heart of the forest. He was surrounded by fowls of all sizes and descriptions, but we supped frugally off cold water and black bread. The hermit had no use for beds, so we slept miserably on the hard, unyielding floor of dried mud.

Rasputin decided to take leave of us at Verchotouria, so we went on alone to Perm, where our saloon carriage was coupled to another train. Crowds came to stare at Anna, and some of their comments made me feel very uneasy. When our saloon was uncoupled, it was done so forcibly that the carriage was almost derailed. But we returned to Petrograd safely, there to be welcomed and thanked by the Empress. One day in 1916 the Empress telegraphed, asking me to come and see her.

"I know *all*, Lili," she said. "Why does Gregori stop in Petrograd? The Emperor doesn't wish it. I don't. And yet, we can't possibly discard him, he's done no wrong. Oh, why won't he see his folly?"

I went at once, with Anna to remonstrate with Rasputin. It was tea-time and he was surrounded by a little crowd of admirers. Next to him sat his *âme damnée*, Akilina Laptinsky, the secret agent, under whose skilful tutelage Rasputin unconsciously played the well-planned game of the Revolutionaries. I asked Rasputin if I could speak to him in private

"But — certainly," he answered, and we went into the next room, Akilina following us.

I did not mince matters.

"Gregori," I said bluntly, "you must leave Petrograd at once. You can pray for their Majesties equally well in Siberia. You *must* go — for their sakes, I implore you — Go —. You know what is said — if you insist upon remaining, it will only mean danger for us all."

Rasputin considered me gravely — he did not speak. I could see Anna's "hurt child" look, I could feel Akilina's sinister scrutiny. Then Rasputin uttered these unexpected words:

"Perhaps thou art right. I'm sick and tired of it all. I'll go."

But a surprising interruption occurred. Akilina banged her clenched fist on the table, and confronted me with rage in her eyes.

"How *dare* you try and control the Father's Spirit?" she screamed. "I say that he *must* stay. Who are you? — why a nobody — you are too insignificant to judge what is best for anyone."

Silence fell in the little room.

"Are you going to listen to the Sister?" I demanded coldly.

Akilina re-commenced her table-banging.

"If you leave Petrograd, Father, you'll have bad luck — you are *not* to go."

"Well — well —," said Rasputin helplessly, "perhaps thou art right. I shall stay."

Greatly distressed I returned to the Palace. The Empress was very disappointed.

"I wonder why the Sister was so against my wishes," she said.

Later on we understood. I think, that despite her plotting and contriving, Akilina really had some affection for Rasputin, and she was occasionally ashamed of her Judas-like rôle. Once when Rasputin left Petrograd on a visit to his family, I went to see him off, and there was Akilina. As the train steamed out she burst into tears — genuine tears. Although I disliked her I said:

"You'd better let me drive you home."

In the car, her tears re-commenced.

"Whatever is the matter?" I enquired. "You'll see the Father again."

Akilina raised her tear-drenched eyes.

"Ah — you know *nothing* — if you only knew — if you only knew what I know."

The feeling against him daily assumed larger proportions. Elidor once sent a woman to kill him, and the Father was badly wounded.

On December 16th when I was at Tsarkoe-Selo, I told the Empress that I wanted to see Rasputin on the morrow.

On the 17th I was rung up from Tsarkoe-Selo. The Empress seemed agitated.

"Lili," she said, "don't go to Father Gregori's today. Something strange has happened. He disappeared last night — nothing has been heard of him, but I'm sure it will be all right. Will you come to the Palace at once?"

I lost no time in taking the train to Tsarkoe-Selo. An Imperial carriage was waiting. I felt the premonition of coming disaster. I went into Anna's bedroom. The familiar room looked strangely unfamiliar — terror lurked in the shadows, and death seemed in the air.

Never did the "*Cabinet Mauve*" look more homelike. The air was sweet with the fragrance of many flowers and the clean odour of burning wood; the Empress was lying down, the Grand-Duchesses sat near her and Anna Virouboff was sitting on a footstool close to the couch. The Empress was very pale — her blue eyes were full of trouble, the young girls were silent, Gregori had disappeared — but I believe the Empress never imagined for one moment that he was dead.

"You will sleep in Anna's house to-night," she said. "I want you to see people for me to-morrow — I am advised that it will be better for me not to do so."

After dinner I went to Anna's house which I was astonished to find in the occupation of the Secret Police who received me courteously, explaining that there was a plot to kill the Empress. As I went into Anna's bedroom an Ikon suddenly fell down with a crash, carrying a portrait of Rasputin with it in its fall. I got into bed — I could not sleep; towards dawn I dropped off in an uneasy slumber. I was suddenly aroused by what seemed a great noise outside. I heard in the distance the tread of countless feet, the sound of many voices: a mighty multitude was marching towards Tsarkoe-Selo — and perhaps there had been a rising at Petrograd. I jumped out of bed, threw on a wrapper and rushed to the dining room. There, all the police officers were asleep on the floor.

My entrance awakened them.

"Why — Madame, what's the matter?" they enquired.

"Cannot you hear the noise — the crowd: Something dreadful has happened at Petrograd."

"We have heard nothing. . . . "

"Oh, but I assure you it's correct."

The police opened the shutters, then the windows. . . . outside all was still with the intense stillness of a winter's night. The officers made no comment. They closed the windows.

"Madame has perhaps been dreaming," said one sympathetically. "She has had much to try her nerves."

When I re-entered the sombre bedroom with its fallen Ikon and its fallen Saint, I shuddered, for although I knew it not, the veil had been lifted. I had heard the fast approaching footsteps of Revolution and Murder.

I was early at the Palace, but the Empress was already up. She told me that M. Protopopoff had urged her to receive no one: there was evidence of a plot to murder her. For the first time, she seemed to feel some misgivings concerning the fate of Rasputin. She manifested no anxiety about her own danger. She was utterly serene and fearless. I was so struck by this that I could not help saying:

"Oh — Madame, you don't seem afraid to die. I always dread death — I'm a horrible coward."

The Empress looked at me in astonishment.

"Surely, Lili, you are not *really* afraid to die?"

"Yes — Madame, I am afraid," I answered.

"I cannot understand anyone being afraid to die," she said, quietly. "I have always looked upon Death as such a friend, such a *rest*. You mustn't be afraid to die, Lili."

I passed an anxious and exciting morning. Nothing was heard of Rasputin, but all kinds of disturbing rumours were current.

Two days later, his body was discovered under the ice in the Neva.

The news of the murder caused the greatest consternation at the Palace — Anna Virouboff was prostrated with grief, and the Imperial Family were deeply concerned. The Emperor was troubled, but his feelings arose from the significance of Rasputin's death. He realized that the murder was the first definite blow against the hitherto absolute power of the Czar!

Akilina Laptinsky came to the Palace immediately after the autopsy had been performed: she wished, so she said, to discuss the question of Rasputin's burial. She was received by the Empress; Anna and I were also present. The "Sister" first asked the Empress if she did not wish to see the corpse.

"Certainly not," replied the Empress — in a tone which admitted of no argument.

"But there is the question of burial —" said Akilina. "Gregory always wished to be buried at Tsarkoe-Selo."

"Impossible . . . impossible. . . ." cried the Empress. "The body had better be taken to Siberia and buried in the 'Father's' village."

Akilina wept . . . . she declared that Rasputin's spirit would never rest were he to be buried so far away from the Palace. The Empress hesitated. . . . I could see she was thinking that it would be equally as unfriendly to discard the dead as to discard the living. Anna Virouboff, however, settled the question by proposing that Rasputin should be interred in the center aisle of the new hospital being built on Anna's own property. There could then be no question of any scandal touching the Imperial Family . . . . this proceeding would only enable people to cast another stone at Anna's already shattered reputation.

So it was settled.

Rasputin's burial took place at 8 o'clock on the morning of December 22. The Empress asked me, on the preceding evening, to meet the Imperial Family by the graveside.

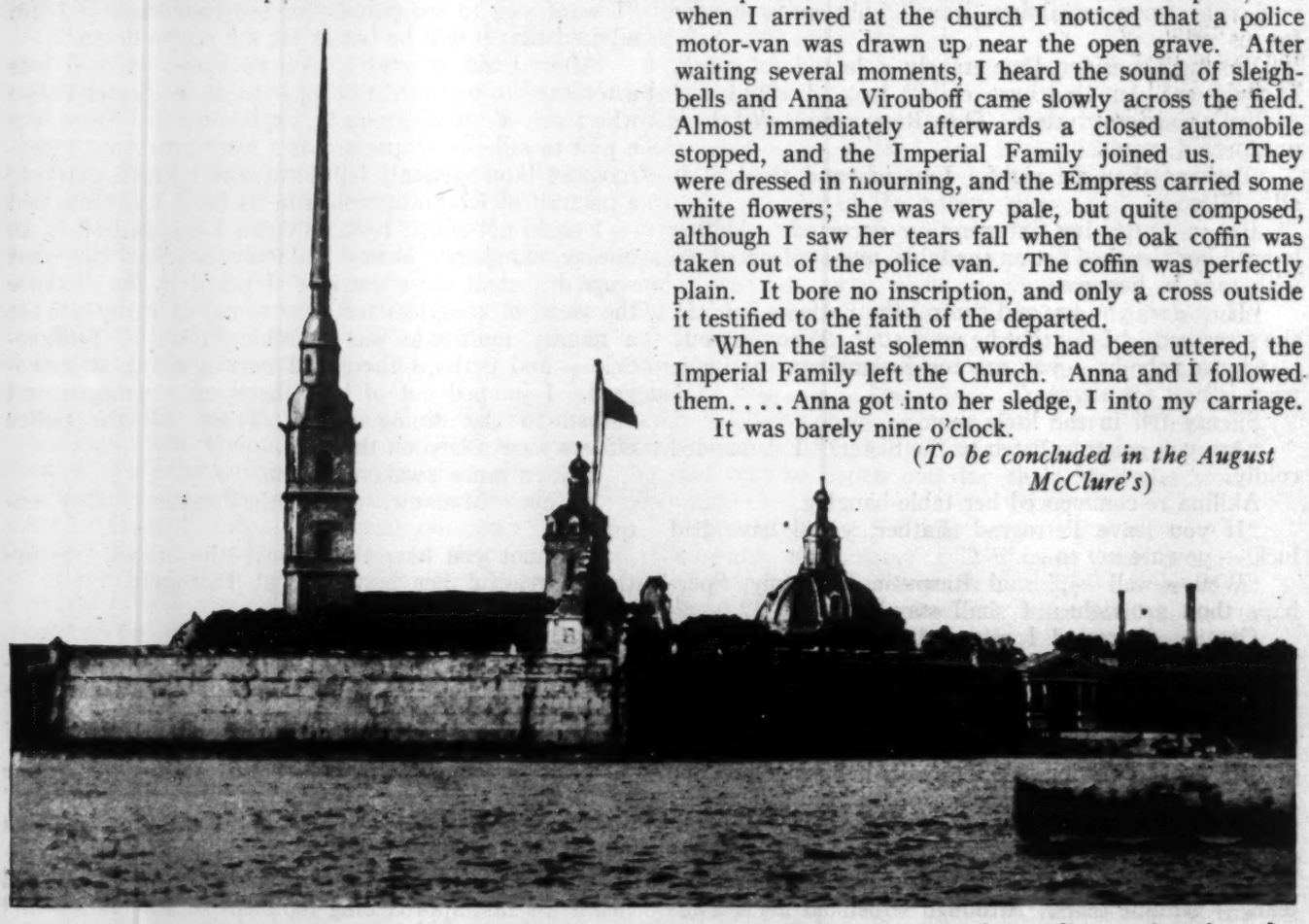
IT was a glorious morning, the sky was a deep blue, the sun was shining, and the hard snow sparkled like masses of diamonds; everything spoke of peace, and I could hardly believe that I was about to witness the closing scene of the greatest scandals and tragedies in History.

My carriage stopped on the road some distance from the Observatory, and I was directed to walk across a frozen field towards the unfinished church. Planks had been placed on the snow to serve as a footpath, and when I arrived at the church I noticed that a police motor-van was drawn up near the open grave. After waiting several moments, I heard the sound of sleigh-bells and Anna Virouboff came slowly across the field. Almost immediately afterwards a closed automobile stopped, and the Imperial Family joined us. They were dressed in mourning, and the Empress carried some white flowers; she was very pale, but quite composed, although I saw her tears fall when the oak coffin was taken out of the police van. The coffin was perfectly plain. It bore no inscription, and only a cross outside it testified to the faith of the departed.

When the last solemn words had been uttered, the Imperial Family left the Church. Anna and I followed them. . . . Anna got into her sledge, I into my carriage.

It was barely nine o'clock.

(*To be concluded in the August McClure's*)



*The fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul on the Neva River, where the Russian Royal Family were imprisoned*

# Corabel's Man

*Another Story of Lost Mountain*

## By Dorothy Thomas

*Author of "Deselee's Preacher," "Sue's Morals"*

IN the rough stone fireplace the great logs blazed and crackled sending their lights and shadows into the four corners of the little mountain cabin. By the chimney corner an old granny smoked her pipe while near her two middle-aged women sat paring apples and three dirty, barefooted children romped at their side. On the opposite side of the hearth an old man dozed, a pretty, fifteen year old mother nursed her child and a young girl in her teens was occupied in throwing apple peelings over her shoulder to tell the fortunes of the family.

Near the open door a young woman, tall and straight of limb, stood by a quilting frame. She was a handsome, healthy young animal, brimming with life. The brown eyes were spirited, lips and chin for all their curves and softness, hinted that she might have a will of her own. There was in her features and bearing a total lack of the shyness and timidity that usually characterizes the mountain woman.

As the strong young arms moved up and down, the gay pattern of the quilt growing under her flying fingers, she hummed softly to herself:

"He'll build me a home on the mountain so high,
Where the wild geese do fly,
Where the wild geese do fly."

"Corabel, quit foolin' with that thar no 'count thing and come over here and help peel these apples," her mother called.

"Hit is some account," the girl retorted angrily, "hit's purty."

"I reckon hit don't make no difference 'bout hit's bein' purty," the old granny said, taking her pipe from her mouth, "just so hit keeps two folks warm."

The joke created great mirth beside the fireplace but Corabel was silent. It did make a difference whether or not the quilt were pretty. Corabel loved pretty things. She wanted a little more than a roof over her head and enough to eat to keep her alive. The girl had spirit and ambition. What if the spirit did take the form of a quick temper and the ambition merely a desire for pretty things?

Corabel was the pride of the Mission. With such young creatures as herself lay the hope of these listless backwoods folk. She listened in wonder to the way the "folks out yonder" lived. Everything the kind Mission Lady said to her was gospel. It was Corabel's ambition to cook like the Mission Lady. Here, living at home with her own family who were "sot" in their ways, it was difficult to carry out the new ideas that the Mission Lady had brought to her. Mannie Sammuels had been "talkin' " to her for more than a year or so, and when at last he had asked her to be his woman, she was doubly glad, for besides just loving him she would have her own cabin and a chance to live as the Mission Lady lived.

"The Mission Lady and that teachin' gal have put fool notions into your head. Look at them pictures," her mother said, pointing scornfully at the gay magazine covers that decorated the wall.

"You know you like lookin' at them pictures of purty ladies," Corabel rejoined with quick indignation. "You said you wondered what the women out yonder wore."

"Hm," she sniffed, "I reckon I kin tell that by the Mission boxes they send up."

Granny could not resist this opportunity to air her grievance.

"Corabel hadn't no right to let Mannie cut a window in this here cabin. Hit's all we could do afore to keep the cold weather out. An' thar's no sense havin' them flowers in them tin cans she's painted."

The New Woman of Cricket Hollow went serenely on with her work, not even looking up until she heard the crackling sound of hoofs on the dry leaves and twigs outside the gate.

"Well, I declare!" she exclaimed, peering out of the door. "Here comes Uncle Newte lookin' powerful important. I recken he has some news fur us."

Uncle Newte was the mountain's substitute for mail carrier, telephone and telegraph operator. Nothing ever happened at Cricket Hollow that Uncle Newte did not know first and was not the first to tell.

As Corabel put away her quilting frame she saw him dismount, hitch his mule to the fence and enter the yard, pausing to take a look at the apple butter kettle that hung on its tripod over the fire. Then he came leisurely up the steps, hands thrust in his ragged pockets.

"Looks like a right smart mess o' apple butter you're makin' thar," he observed, as he entered the cabin.

"Come in, Uncle Newte and make yourself easy," granny called from the fireplace.

"Looks like the weather'll be settin' in soon," he said dropping down on the fireside bench, beginning to chatter in a provokingly garrulous manner.

The assembled family was on edge to know what news he had, for Uncle Newte was never so loquaciously deliberate, never so important as when he had news to tell. The only disinterested one was the young oracle who continued absorbed in her fortune telling. Suddenly the girl began to clap her hands and shout:

"Oh, thar's going' to be a weddin', thar's going to be a weddin'!"

"O, wall I calculate thar's goin' to be more than just a weddin' on this here mountain." Uncle Newte announced with an air of mystery.

"Well don't take so long about tellin' us, Uncle Newte," Corabel said, seating herself by the fireplace, a pan of apples in her lap. The old man took a few leisurely puffs on his pipe, then in an indifferent tone remarked:

"Polly Sammuels passed out this evenin'."

Terror stricken silence fell upon the little group.

Granny screamed, the children frightened, stopped in their play and even the old grandfather was roused from his slumbers.

"Thar's a spell on them Sammuels women," Corabel's mother said, trembling.

"That's the sixth Sammuels woman that's died in

five months," Granny reminded them, her thin cracked voice ominous.

"I saw Maggie jest the other day an' you'd hardly know she was goin' to have a baby," Bug Gentry ventured.

"Did it die?" the young mother asked anxiously.

"Hit only lived a few minutes," Uncle Newte informed her. "Hit war a girl too," he added significantly.

The paring knife dropped from Corabel's fingers, the pan of apples rolled upon the floor.

"Tweren't a girl, tweren't a girl!" she cried hysterically.

"Wall I reckon I ought to know," Uncle Newte said indignantly, "Nig nursed her an' she told me."

Corabel was trembling; cold beads of perspiration stood out upon her forehead. "That makes seven Sammuels women!" she screamed.

All eyes were centered upon the girl who was soon to become another Sammuels woman.

"Thar, Corabel, don't take on so," her mother said with quick understanding, "Mannie Sammuels weren't no 'count nohow," she added, thinking to console her.

Corabel's eyes blazed furiously; she turned on her well-meaning mother like a young panther.

"DON'T you talk such things," she cried, springing from her chair. "You know Mannie works steady at the stave mill all summer and hauls wood all winter. Ain't he got his barn full o' grain and don't he own more hogs than any man on this here mountain and can't he write his own name? Ain't he a member in the Mission Ladies' Sunday School? Don't you be sayin' such things 'cause you know thar ain't no truth in them."

The little group was silenced.

Presently Bug Gentry ventured:

"Wall I wouldn't want no gal of mine to marry into the Sammuels family."

"Hit's a jedgment on Polly's grandmother fer livin' thar with Goose's old man," old grandfather said, shaking his head.

"Yes, an' her mother ran off with a fella from 'cross the mountain," the nursing mother put in.

"Howdy," some one called from the doorway, "Hit's a right purty evenin'."

"I declar folks is comin' a'ready," Corabel's mother exclaimed, rising to meet her neighbors who had been invited to her apple butter bilin'.

There was great excitement when the news of Polly's death went round. Insensible to all this chatter, Corabel moved among and spoke to her friends as one in a trance. With native tact and kindliness they avoided any reference to her courtship with Mannie Sammuels. Indeed they were understanding enough to ignore the girl.

After her first passionate outburst at the news of the death of Polly Sammuels and her girl baby, Corabel had cast about for some means of avoiding a like fate for herself other than giving up her man. Inheriting from her backwoods ancestors a horde of superstitious traditions, from childhood steeped in stories of spells and spooks, it was natural for her, in spite of the Mission Lady's powerful influence, to revert in this hour of grief to the old primitive beliefs. She became obsessed with the idea that her only salvation lay in bribing the witch doctor to raise the spell from the Sammuels family.

When the company had gathered about the huge iron kettle where the apple butter was boiling, Corabel slipped quietly out of the cabin door. In the shadows of the autumn dusk she went unseen to the back of the cabin and crossing the stream that ran by the door, hastened to the Old Rock which had ever since her childhood been a hiding place for her treasures. Brushing aside small twigs and leaves she reached down into the recesses of the rock and drew forth a small tin box. In it were her precious savings. How hard she had worked to earn them! With what high hopes had she dropped each shining coin into that box! She had dreamed of buying a beautiful cook stove for her home. With trembling fingers she tucked the box under her arm and moved stealthily away, striking into the very heart of the wood toward the witch doctor's solitary cabin.

The grey dusk held a thousand terrors for Corabel. Every rock that was in the daytime a loved landmark to her now rose up a hideous monster. All the "killings" that had ever occurred on the mountain had been committed on the road to the witch doctor's. Every turn of the road, each gnarled tree or giant rock, called to her frenzied mind some frightful tale. The scurrying of a rabbit across dried leaves chilled her blood with fear. At the shriek of an owl the strength seemed to leave her body. She thought she must fall down upon the ground but the desperate hope that the witch doctor would lift the spell impelled her to speed swiftly on. She picked her way across the stones of rushing streams, climbing obstructive rail fences, dragging herself up precipitous hillsides almost too frightened to breathe.

At last the witch doctor's cabin was in sight, and with an hysterical cry of relief Corabel ran toward it.

She knocked timidly.

An old cracked voice called from within:

"Lift the latch."

Obeying, Corabel entered.

THE witch doctor sat on a bench by the fire, a pipe in her mouth and a cup of cherry wine in her hand. She was weirdly hideous with her ashen skin wrinkled over jutting cheek bones, white, stringy hair clinging like snakes about her head and shoulders, and her little bead-like eyes glittering from the depths of their sunken sockets. The cabin was windowless, foul with bad air and filth. Like all mountain cabins it lacked comfortable furniture, an old spinning wheel and a bed being all that it could boast.

Goose was a crafty, feline, miserly old hag, feared because of her age and reputation by the entire mountain, a terror even to those who did not believe in her. It was reputed that she could make miraculous cures, cast horrible spells upon those who doubted or wronged her, and that she knew what folks did even though she were not present to see. Many of her prophecies were inspired by her interpretations of the Bible, which interpretations were most original and shaped to meet her own ends. She said the devil had taught her to read, but there were a few old folks on the mountain who dared remember that she had been taught by her old man who learned a "powerful lot out at the other war." It was reported that the witch doctor had a goodly sum of money hidden about her place, for she made no prophecy, lifted no spell, unless she were paid for her necromancy.

Goose was surprised to see Corabel, for the girl had long renounced her. Corabel's scornful incredulity had made other disbelievers, and the old sorceress hated her as she hated the Mission Ladies and the country doctor who were taking away her trade.

"Hit's a late night for a gal to be out," was her only greeting.

Corabel stepped forward quickly.

"I had to see you right off! I want you to help me!"

"What's wrong that the Mission Ladies can t fix?" the old woman sneered.

"I came to tell you that Polly Sammuels ——"

"Yes, she's dead," Goose interrupted, smoking on serenely.

A cry of terror came from Corabel's lips. "How do you know, Goose? How do you know such things?"

"Up here in her cabin old Goose knows everything that goes on," she mumbled. "What the tea leaves don't tell her the Bible do."

The witch doctor's presence, surroundings, and uncanny mumblings all worked upon the girl's excited mind. By this time she had quite forgotten the Mission Lady's discovery that it was Goose's custom to send her hunch-backed, half-crazed grandchild spying about the community in order that he could bring the news surreptitiously back to her.

"You know everything, even before Uncle Newte!" Corabel cried hysterically.

"Yes, and her girl baby's passed out too," Goose muttered, sipping her wine. "Hit's the spell I put on the Sammuels women; none of 'em last."

With trembling hands that were numb and cold with fear, Corabel held forth her box of money.

The old hag lunged forward, stretching her bony hands out greedily for the box.

"So you brought me a present, honey," she whined.

Corabel clung to her treasure.

"It's for you if you lift the spell."

The witch doctor began to laugh in a gurgling, crazy way that made the girl shudder.

"Raise the spell!" she shrieked. "Well I reckon not! Polly Sammuels's grandmother used to sleep right here in this cabin with my old man and Goose don't forgit things."

Corabel rattled the box temptingly.

"Thar's five dollars — five dollars!"

"I put a spell on them and I put it there to stay. They've been dyin' off right smart these past few months. The fever got 'em, and Goose will send worse things to the rest of the Sammuels women."

"I'll soon earn more money — please, Goose, please," the girl pleaded.

THE old woman laughed fiendishly.

"I seen you and Mannie Sammuels goin' by lookin' like a courtin' couple an' I says to myself, 'wall if she wants to be another Sammuels woman she kin.' "

Corabel's face went pale. The life seemed to have left her body. Her arms hung limply at her sides; she could scarcely hold the little tin box. In silence she turned and opened the door.

"If you marry Mannie Sammuels I'll put a worse spell on you than on any of 'em yit, and when your baby comes hit'll be a girl and hit'll die, too!" Goose screamed at her as she went out into the night.

The anguish of Corabel's soul was too great for her to feel any bodily fear as she went home through the darkness that night. Her baby would come. It would have no father. It would live in a home as dingy and cheerless as the one where her own childhood had been spent. It would have to sleep in the bed with the rest of the family. The Mission Ladies would be disappointed if she and Mannie were not married, for they had promised to wed and be an example to the other young folks on the mountain. But if she married Mannie the dear good Mission Lady could do nothing for her, for Goose's spell would work upon her and no one could raise the spell but Goose herself. Much as she loved Mannie, great as was her longing for a clean, pretty home, she dared not face that spell. Better that her expected baby should live in her mother's wretched home than die of a spell. Corabel, like all her mountain kinsfolks, had a horror of death that dominated every other instinct within her. Any misery was better than death, and to die of a spell, that was unspeakable. These fearful premonitions haunting her, she moved on through the darkness like some helpless, hunted creature of the woods.

Long before she was within sight of the cabin she heard the gay sound of laughter and merry shouts of the folks at the apple butter boiling. She crept cautiously nearer, keeping within the shadows of the cornstalks until she was near enough to distinguish the faces of the company that gathered about the fire. How gay and happy they were; tomorrow they would be weeping at Polly Sammuels's burying!

As two lovers stirred the apple butter they chanted the old familiar rhyme:

"Once around and twice in the middle,
That's the way to stir an apple butter kittle."

HOW many times she and Mannie had sung that song together, and how often he purposely "bumped the bale" so she would have to forfeit a kiss. She looked about the circle until she found him. There he was—taller, straighter, handsomer than any of them. How good he was, how kind, and what kisses!

"Hit's a terrible sorry thing!" she cried, throwing herself upon the ground.

She lay there some moments, shoulders heaving. Then rising, she dragged herself to the cabin.

Mannie must have seen her for she had been there only a few moments when he joined her.

"I declar, Corabel," he exclaimed, as he stood in the doorway, twirling his hat, "I been lookin' all over for you."

Corabel turned her back upon him. It was some time before she dared trust herself to speak. When she did there was no sign of anguished love in her voice:

"Wall, you better quit lookin' for me because I ain't goin' to have nothin' to do with you."

The big youth stared at her.

"Why—why, Corabel! We've been talkin' to each other for most a year and yer goin' to have my baby and yer carryin' on like this. You must be crazy!"

"I ain't crazy," she retorted, "and you ain't goin' to git me into your house to die. There's somethin' queer about Sammuels men. They do kill off their women powerful fast."

Great beads of sweat stood out on the boy's brow.

"Yer ain't skeered o' the spell?" he asked in a trembling voice that betrayed his own fear.

Silence. He ventured a step nearer.

"Corabel, I love you! By God in Heaven I love you!" he cried out.

The girl could stand no more. Wheeling about she flung one arm toward the door.

"Git!" she said, not looking at him.

Mannie continued to look at her with dumb, hurt eyes.

"Corabel ——" he began.

She did not take her eyes from the door.

"Git, I tell you."

At last Mannie turned and lunged, like a drunken man, toward the door.

Corabel got back to the fireside bench, dropping down upon it, exhausted. There she sat, silent, motionless, in a grief too deep for expression, until, hours later, her family roused her from her stupor.

## II

IT was late in the afternoon of the Lamb corn-shucking. All day his neighbors had toiled in the field, cutting, binding and stacking the yellow stalks. Toiled — yes, yet played and made of their work a frolic. The hillside rang with shouts and song and laughter. Children played at hide-and-seek behind the corn stacks; lovers stole kisses and sly handclasps under cover of the friendly stalks; old men and women gossiped over their pipes. And there had been a great dinner of 'possum, rabbit, cabbage, beans, with plenty of corn pones, molasses, apple butter, and, it was whispered, a bit of Goose's wine.

The sun had left the hillside field in shadow, but its rays still shone upon the valley below. Autumn fields glistened like gold, and the little stream that scampered by the Lamb cabin sparkled like a diamond necklace.

"I'l be dogged, Corabel," Mathy Crane called over to the girl, "ef you ain't outshucked me!"

All day Corabel had worked with automatic swiftness, in silence, seemingly unconscious of those about her. When her companion spoke she did not raise her head but continued to wield the shucking pin with sure, practised fingers. He was surprised when she flung out at him:

"Wall hit'd be a good thing ef you'd work as fast. War's Cricket an' the young uns?"

The boy father hung his head.

"They didn't have no shoes an' I was afraid the weather might set in afore night. Joe Lamb's let his corn lay powerful late — hit's like to snow any time."

Corabel could not be diverted by talk of the danger of Joe Lamb losing his crop of corn. Mathy Crane was a lazy good for nothing and he'd married her sister. Corabel had let him alone all day, but now love and pity for her sister's plight tore her from out her own unhappiness and she hurled angry accusations upon the offending brother-in-law.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself — hanging around them women down in the Hollow. You're lazy an' no account an' the pity is thar's more like you on this mountain. Tain't no excuse for it nether, with bark to haul, wood to cut, an' the stave mill to work in.

"Why hain't you laid sompin' by fer the winter? You ain't saved money nor apples nor beans nor corn nor nothin'. You're too lazy even to raise hogs that takes care o' themselves! When the weather sets in you'll bring your family to pop and set down on us all winter!"

Mathy Crane was shamed to silence, for Corabel spoke the truth.

The girl had a certain power over her mountain neighbors and as she preached the Mission Lady's doctrine her influence was for the good. She knew more than the rest and that made her dangerous. Then every one knew that she was afraid of no man. She "talked right up to a man like he was just another woman." Some folks said if she kept right on she'd be as smart as Goose!

"We could git on alright here on this mountain ef we'd mind what the Mission Lady says an' ef you would treat the women right."

Corabel, from force of habit, still sang the Mission Lady's praises, though since the death of Polly and Polly's girl baby, her own faith had been somewhat shaken.

Mathy went on sullenly with the business of tying together a bundle of stalks. There was nothing he could say in self defense.

In a nearby group much excited talk had been going on about the great war "out yonder."

"Them German fellers is fighters alright," observed a lounger of the country store.

"Yes," returned another, "they don't fight with their fists. They shoot from up above an' down below — anywhar but whar you're countin' on it."

"Whar is this here war, in Germany or in Europe?"

"Ax Corabel," the Crane boy suggested, slyly.

The talk had fallen upon Corabel's deaf ears. She had retired into her own sorrow again. What did she care about some row out yonder that did not concern her nor hers?

"Corabel," Joe Lamb called, "you larnt everything the Mission Lady knows; maybe you can tell us —" and he repeated the geographical puzzle.

Corabel was a young woman to be counted upon to arise to any occasion; besides she was flattered at this tribute to her superior knowledge. For the second time during the day she condescended to come out of her self-centered lethargy.

She pointed to the Mission Lady, who was binding a bundle of corn a few yards distant.

"You know whar Miss Effie comes from?" she asked, pausing, then answering herself, "Philadelphia. That's whar they're fightin'!"

Her audience accepted this information as gospel and, having delivered herself of it, the young priestess again turned her thoughts inward. Talk of the war went on, but she did not heed it. What could such vague rumblings of a fight out yonder mean to her when her own soul was torn with anguish, when a witch's wicked spell kept her from her own true love? Of what importance were wars and rumors of wars? There were others on the mountain who were as complacently indifferent; indeed, that was the attitude of all the women.

"I recken hit ain't no concern of ours," a young mother nursing her babe remarked lightly.

"Hit ain't!" Mathy Crane exclaimed with a wise air. "Wall, I tell you they'd uv got me ef I hadn't been married. Didn't you hear about Jeff Breeden from 'cross the mountain — how they took him when he was all the dependence his mother had? They don't care for nothin' ner nobody ef they once get sot on takin' a man for the Army."

"Humph," the girl sniffed in contempt. "Ef they tried takin' my man I'd tell the Mission Lady on 'em."

The young mother shrugged her shoulders with a final air. There was no more to be said. Her reliance upon the wisdom and power of the "Mission Lady" was beautiful and typical. Had not the Mission Lady got them the school, the post office? Did a fight or a lawsuit ever fail when she was on its side? Couldn't she cure folks quicker than the witch doctor? An old mountaineer voiced the inarticulate sentiment of the whole mountain when he said, " 'Deed the Mission Lady she's better'n God." So what fear could a body have with such a woman on her side? That the Mission Lady would take the side of the folks out yonder never occurred to any of them.

"Wall, I don't mind sayin' I'd be powerful skeered ef I had to go out an' git in that fight," drawled a powerful mountain youth.

"I recken hit's quittin' time," Mathy Crane said, yawning and stretching comfortably.

He, too, had no concern in this war. He was married and he rested serenely upon this fact. It was the one compensation for being married.

Corabel chanced to raise her head. Within her vision came the ragged figure of Uncle Newte, dismounting at the foot of the hill.

"I recken hit is quittin' time 'cause here comes Uncle Newte to help," she said laughing.

He made a grotesque picture as he limped up the hill, leaning heavily upon his walnut stick, the inevitable burlap sack slung over his shoulder. The coat he wore "was nothin' much afore an' rather less than half o' that behind," and his time-worn breeches made the Mission Lady blush. Shoes, several sizes too large, were tied with rope upon his feet, their leather tongues flapping as he walked.

"Ef Uncle Newte hadn't tried to hide from that other war he wouldn't be limpin' around like he is now." Mathy remarked and repeated the tale of Uncle Newte's escape into the mountain. "They say hit took a long time afore he'd believe the war was over an' he was skeered to let the doctor look at his leg afear he'd send him to the war," the boy chuckled. "He might as well have gone to the war stead o' stayin' home an' gettin' hurt anyhow. He like to died."

Folks were so used to Uncle Newte's twisted leg that the story of how he got it was almost forgotten. But the irony of the tale struck Mathy's primitive sense of humor. As a lisping youngster at his grandfather's knee the story had delighted him and it never ceased to delight him.

Corabel had given the recital little attention. When the old news carrier appeared she nodded curtly.

"Howdy, folks," Uncle Newte said, stooping to pick up an ear of corn. Turning it about this way and that, he pressed it with his fingers, scrutinized it with his crafty old eyes.

"Joe's corn ain't so good this year," he remarked; whereupon he began to fill his bag with Joe Lamb's condemned corn.

"Wall, Uncle Newte, do you know anything this evening?" Herbert asked. (No one thought anything of Uncle Newte's open thievery. It was taken for granted that what he took was in payment for his habitual and unfailing information. News carrying was his profession and it was not considered an ignoble one.

"Oh, thar ain't much news," he replied, carefully selecting the handsomest ears. It was part of his game to keep his audience waiting and to give out staggering bits of news in a nonchalant manner. "Nothin' 'ceptin Mannie Samuel is drafted."

At the mention of Mannie's name Corabel started.

"What's drafted mean?" she asked.

"Bein' arrested for the Army," Mathy explained airily.

Some moments passed before his words had any meaning for her. When she realized them she sprang up like a column of fire.

"You mean they're goin' to take my man an' make him go out thar an' git killed in a fight he ain't got nothin' to do with?"

"They're takin' all the single fellers," the old man said, shaking his head.

"Too bad I got a wife an' young uns to buy shoes for," Mathy said with a sanctimonious air.

"Wall, they won't git Mannie neither, fer he won't be single long!" Corabel cried.

All fear of the spell vanished; all thought of self was swept aside. She must save her man at any price.

"War is he? War is he?" she demanded hysterically.

"Comin' up here I seen him goin' to the mill an' a sorry lookin' lad he war."

Corabel waited for no more. Springing past them she dashed down the hill, stones and dried cornshells rolling in her wake. Her neighbors watched her dart across the narrow foot bridge that spanned the stream at the foot of the hill, mount Uncle Newte's mule, and switching the old animal out of her customary inertness, disappear from sight.

"Great day in the mornin'!" Uncle Newte ejaculated at this impertinence and gazed after her, open mouthed.

As she rode on Corabel was filled with uncontrollable rage at the unjust "folks out yonder." What had Mannie to do with their fight? What had they ever done for Mannie, for her, or for any of the mountain folks? They would tear her lover from her arms. She hated them, she loathed them, she cursed them.

Though she seemed not to listen to the afternoon's conversation, parts of it must have struck into her subconscious mind, for now she recalled the story of Uncle Newte's escape and Mathy Crane's bragging assurance that he was safe because he was married. She would make her man doubly safe. She would marry him and together they would hide in the woods, as Uncle Newte had hid.

She never once doubted Mannie's attitude in the matter. Often she had heard him speak of his fear of being sent "out yonder" to the war; though true, she had only half listened to such talk. She knew what tortures of fear all the mountain boys suffered at the mere thought of being forced into the Army. Corabel believed they were justified. In her eyes it was not a stamp of cowardice; her lover lost nothing of manliness. Was he not the best shot on the mountain? Could he not lift the heaviest weight? Could he not split the toughest log? Would he not fight to the last drop for her or for any of his people? But to leave his mountain, his people, his woman, to fight for some one he did not know — in a fight that did not concern him? Die in a strange land among strange people? Better that she and her coming baby should die of a thousand horrible spells!

AT the Haunted Rock Corabel dismounted, crossed the road and pushed her way into the laurel bushes, pulling Uncle Newte's mule behind her.

She had not waited long before she saw Mannie coming along the bend in the road. Not her gay, singing Mannie, but indeed a sorry Mannie, with head sunk down upon his chest and arms hanging limply at his sides.

Her mother heart went out to him in tenderness and pity. She felt a thousand years older than he. She longed to take him in her arms, to comfort him, to tell him that she could save him — that she was willing to give her life for him. But mountain folk are not given to outward show of such emotions. When he was opposite her in the road she merely called out:

"Evenin', Mannie."

He raised his head. Her voice he recognized, but he could not see her. The bushes parted and Corabel, her handsome head held high, stepped out on the road like a young Amazon.

"You're drafted, ain't you?" she said, calmly.

The stricken youth nodded.

No further greeting passed between them. Mannie showed no sign of pleasure at sight of her.

Silence. Then:

"They don't take married men," she said significantly.

"I ain't married," he answered dully.

"Wall, you fool, ain't I going to marry you!" she cried exasperated.

Mannie stared at her.

"I thought you quit me."

"Quittin' you when you're in luck an' quittin' you when you're out o' luck is two different things."

Mannie's heart was in his eyes. It was not of the war he thought now; he felt only a glad exaltation, his woman was coming back to him.

"Corabel ——" he choked.

"Get down off that thar hoss," she demanded, indignantly. "How kin a man talk to a woman clean across the road from her?"

Mannie needed no further invitation. Springing from his horse he came close to her.

With her man standing so near to her, towering above her, his eyes burning into hers, the mother, the Amazon was swept aside. Simply she was his woman.

"Ain't you skeered o' the spell?" he asked, still doubtful.

He had her in his arms, her body drawn close to his, his lips pressed to hers in a long kiss.

## III

THE Mission Lady's helper was busily sorting cast-off garments that some benevolent lady of the world had sent to the Mission. She looked up in surprise as Miss Effie, obviously dressed for a journey, appeared in the doorway.

"Off so early, and on mail day?" she inquired.

"I'm sorry to leave you alone on such a busy day, but I just have to look for Mannie. He had three days to report to the board and if he doesn't give himself up by that time there'll be trouble. Will you pick out some warm clothes for Corabel, pretty ones?" the Mission Lady asked.

"If you can convert Corabel you'll get Mannie," the other woman said, selecting an almost new gingham dress of a gay pattern.

"I've got to get them somehow. I've counted on those two children to be examples to the rest of my people and I can't see Mannie an outlaw," Miss Effie said, reaching up for her saddle bag that was already packed with provisions. "Well, I'm off to the Bearstand."

"Do you really think they are hiding up there in Uncle Newte's old cabin?"

"I believe so — anyway, I'm going to find out. They've been gone two months now; Corabel's baby must have been born. We've had bitter weather and I know they haven't proper clothes and food."

"Here are the clothes," the Mission Lady's helper said, handing her a bundle. "It's a long way to the Bearstand and it's frightfully cold. I hope you find them."

"I may not get back to-night — or I might bring them both back here with me," Miss Effie called as she went out of the door.

The lazy December sun had not yet risen when the Mission Lady started forth on her journey. A chill wind whined through snow-clad trees that raised their arms like ghosts to the gray sky. The wind stung Miss Effie's face. She shivered, swung her arms about, and took her feet from out the stirrups, holding them close to the horse's warm flesh.

Presently a rosy hue appeared on an opposite hillside. Trees began to sparkle, glisten as though hung with tinsel and a myriad crystal balls, until at last the whole mountain world burst forth into a dazzling fairyland of brilliance and beauty.

The Mission Lady made several visits as she went up the mountain, and, though warmly assured that "Thar was plenty o' time to go," left the friendly firesides and pressed on through the cold toward the Bearstand.

She had passed the Haunted Rock and was nearing Goose's cabin when her horse suddenly shied. She reined in and looked to the side of the road. There was a slight movement in the bushes. As she looked close she detected a scrap of checked gingham apron caught on a greedy green briar.

"Who is there!"

No answer.

"Do come out," she coaxed, convinced that it must be some shy mountain girl.

After a moment's pause the rhododendron bushes parted and Corabel, pale, haggard, stepped out upon the road.

"You, Corabel, I'm so glad," she cried.

The girl drew back into the bushes.

"You know I'm your friend," the Mission Lady said, slipping from her horse and extending both her hands in friendly greeting.

Corabel was shivering both with fright and cold.

"I won't tell whar Mannie is," she said defiantly.

"But you will tell me about the baby!"

Tears gushed to her eyes.

"She's doin' poorly. My milk's gone dry — that's why I'm here."

Miss Effie took the girl's chapped, bleeding hands in hers.

"Oh, you don't mean you've left her there without —"

Corabel shook her head.

"No'm, Mannie milked somebody's cow from the t'other side of the mountain an' there's enough to keep her till to-morrow noon. Me an' Mannie ain't got nothin' 'ceptin' cabbage an' coffee and we ain't goin' to kill our young-un with sich victuals like most folks on this mountain do. We wouldn't care for ourselves, but we want that baby to live even if —" Her voice broke and tears scalded down her cheeks.

"Come with me, Corabel, I'll see that you get milk from the Mission."

"No'm, they might try to get Mannie for the war, even ef we are married — you furreigners is powerful smart."

"I'm not a foreigner. I wouldn't tell where Mannie is — even if I knew," the Mission Lady protested.

"No'm," Corabel said, ashamed. "We named our baby after you. Hit's called Miss Effie," she added to make amends.

"I'm delighted. Then surely you'll let me help Miss Effie? If you're afraid of the Mission we'll go into the village where no one knows you. I have a few things here in my saddle bag, but we'll buy more at the store for you to take back to Mannie and the baby. I promise you I'll force you to do nothing that you do not wish to do. But we must save your baby," she pleaded.

Still loyal to her man, Corabel refused.

"I'll go to Mammy — she won't tell even ef she didn't want me to marry into the Sammuels's."

"But they're all down with the fever at Mammy's; they've sold the cow and they're almost as bad off as you are."

Distracted sobs broke from the young mother.

"The baby'll die — the baby'll die. Hit's the spell," she wailed. "Goose won't raise it — I'm just about gone an' the baby's dyin', too."

Miss Effie took her by the arm and looked her squarely in the eye.

"See here, Corabel," she said, severely. "You promised us that you wouldn't believe in spooks and spells. You know very well that the Sammuels women all die because they don't have proper food, and don't keep themselves clean, and their men work them too hard. Are you going to let that baby die because you won't trust me?"

It was a choice between her man and her child and this primitive, hunted creature chose her child.

She permitted herself to be wrapped in one of Miss Effie's warm sweaters and helped upon the horse. Together the two women started toward the village, Corabel, limp and exhausted, clinging to the horse's mane, the Mission Lady walking at her side.

The way was long and as the day wore on it grew colder. Down steep, slippery paths they went, through pathless woods where the snow was waist deep, across treacherous, ice-bound streams. Several times they stopped and made a fire to warm themselves and Miss Effie shared her chocolate and bread with the mountain girl.

The sun had long set when they reached the village. From the hotel windows flickered the light of oil lamps and the lights and shadows of a roaring fire.

A room secured, Miss Effie made Corabel comfortable in a great warm bed and after washing and warming herself by the fire, went to the village to make her purchases.

At the store there was much talk of a "gatherin' " and supper at the school house that evening.

"You'd better come, Miss Effie," the friendly merchant said. "There's to be speakin' 'bout the war. A young man from the University's comin' to tell us 'bout the Army."

At the farmer's, where she went for milk, there was more talk of the "gatherin'."

"I wonder," she said, as she walked back to the hotel, "if by some miracle this meeting would be the means of converting Corabel."

On her way to her room she glanced in the dining room door. At the long table were assembled the country doctor, the minister, school teacher, two drummers and the town lawyer — a formidable gathering that would have frightened Corabel into a miserable shyness.

With persuasive conversation, a pleasant smile, and a bit of change, she bribed the landlady into sending their supper to their room, a thing unprecedented in the history of the modest inn.

"Corabel, here's the milk," she said, as she threw open the bedroom door.

The young mother was awake instantly.

"Oh, Miss Effie!" she cried, gratefully.

"And look," the Mission Lady said, opening her saddle bag and bringing forth a neat gingham dress, under garments, warm coat, stockings, and shining black shoes.

"Me? Mine?" she gasped.

Miss Effie nodded.

"Come now get dressed. You've had two hours of sleep. Supper will be here soon — we're lucky to get any so late."

Corabel began to put the gingham dress on over her torn, soiled waist.

"Oh, no. Soap and water first."

When they had finished their supper and sat cozily about the fire Miss Effie suddenly announced:

"I'm going to take you to a party to-night."

A refreshed, rested Corabel looked up at her.

"Thar'd be all furreigners, Miss Effie," she said in alarm.

"Just the village people. No one here knows you. If they did they wouldn't know where Mannie is hiding. It's a speaking and supper. Wouldn't it be fun!"

Corabel caught sight of her clean shining self in the mirror. A speaking and a supper! She'd heard her father tell about going to one once when he was snowed in the village on a trading trip. There was milk for her baby, her man was safe; she might never again in all her life come so far away from home — and she did look so nice —

"I'll go, Miss Effie," she said, shyly.

The Mission Lady was weary, footsore and loath to leave the fire, but the hope that something might be said that would awaken a spark of patriotism in Corabel goaded her on.

As for Corabel, she was content to sally forth radiant in her new finery, like many a feminine young operagoer — to see and be seen.

The local oratory was flowery, abounding in catch newspaper phrases and elaborate gestures. The speakers were dull and long winded. Miss Effie's eyes drooped and Corabel entertained herself with counting the printed flowers on her new dress.

Toward the end of the evening the young University man, fresh from the Training Camp, handsome in his new uniform, took the stand.

He spoke simply, earnestly, his voice vibrant with youthful ardor. In a clear and vivid manner he told of the German system of murder and the possibilities of that system being carried on over here. Urging enlistment, he put the war on the simplest, most primitive basis, appealing to the people's sense of honor and instinct of self-preservation.

CORABEL never took her eyes from the young soldier; she seemed to be drinking in every word, her face white, terror-stricken, as though she were living the very horrors he described.

When he had finished and the crowd was applauding, Corabel turned in trembling excitement to Miss Effie.

"Is he telling the truth?" she demanded.

"He is."

"They kill women and starve babies and spile folk's crops?" she asked, incredulous.

The Mission Lady nodded.

"Why, Miss Effie, we don't fight that way on the mountains," the backwoods girl said with pride.

Corabel ate nothing at the supper that followed the speaking. The crowd, which at any other time would have waked great curiosity and much embarrassment, did not frighten nor even interest her. She was as one in a trance — a seer of strange visions, emerging only occasionally to repeat some part of the soldier's speech and inquire of Miss Effie if it could be true.

"When I tell Mannie about it he'll be mad enough to fight," she was growing passionate in her loyal claims for Mannie, "he aint skeered to fight if he's got a good reason."

On the way back to the hotel she was silent and in thoughtful silence undressed. Tired as she was, she could not sleep. She was impatient for the night to end that she might tell her man all these things that he did not know about the war.

Long into the night the Mission Lady could hear

her tossing and sighing and she felt that a new kind of conversion was going on here with travail of soul.

Early next morning the two women started up the mountain. Corabel insisted that the Mission Lady ride the horse while she herself took the foot path that was a short cut to Uncle Newte's cabin.

Food, warm clothes, and a glimpse at the outside world had made another girl of the Corabel who only yesterday was a half-starved, frenzied slave to superstition.

She was in high spirits as she burst into the cabin.

"Oh, Mannie," she called.

He rose up from the bed where he had been anxiously watching over the baby.

"Got any milk?" he asked in a troubled voice. "She's drunk up all we had and I'm skeered she'll die."

She held the kettle aloft.

"Heaps," she answered cheerfully.

Then she walked to the bed, bending eagerly over her baby.

"She's sleepin' purty as kin be. 'Tweren't the spell workin' on her — nothin' wrong 'ceptin' we ain't had enough to eat."

She turned from her baby to Mannie.

"Oh, Mannie, you gotta go," she burst out, white and breathless, "you jes gotta 'cause them outlaws is slaughterin' even children, drownden a hundred babies ——" Her voice failed her, as she caught her man and waited for him to speak.

"Gotta go whar?" he asked, dully.

"Why to the war, of course. If us Americans — an' you an' me is Americans — the soldier at the Speakin' said so — if we don't go over there an' lick them Germans they'll be comin' over to this country an' the first thing you know they'll be right up on this here mountain burnin' our cabins, spilin' our land, and killin' our babies and ——" she paused before hurling her last bit of information at him, "and takin' your women!"

"Ah, they wouldn't dare," he boasted, drawing up his six feet of brawn to its full height.

"They would, Gospel," she replied, gravely. "Look here, Mannie, your grandfather an' your father worked hard clearin' the Sammuels's land and buildin' the cabin an' breakin' in the soil. You've worked hard, too, keepin' it up an' you ain't goin' to let some furriner come in an' take it away from you."

"I reckon not," he exclaimed, growing indignant.

"Ain't you shamed to hide back here like Uncle Newte when sich things is happen' to other Americans?" Corabel demanded, proud of her newly discovered nationality.

Mannie looked sheepish.

"We couldn't be worse off than we are back here. The baby and me could live to the Mission — I could work for Miss Effie — she said so."

The great, hulking fellow was silent, turning these staggering facts over in his mind.

"Miss Effie says that ef you'll go to the war mebbie hit'll mind the folks out yonder that some Americans is livin' back here an' they'll want to help us," she said, enthusiastically.

"The Mission Lady says hit's right an' you say hit's right — so I recken hit must be right," Mannie reasoned, slowly, his arm tightened around her. "Corabel," he said, his voice husky. "You were't skeered to die of the spell because you loved me — wall, I ain't skeered to die at the war — because I love you!"

His woman clung to him, tears of gladness and sorrow in her eyes now that she knew he would go.

Presently she smiled up at him through her tears and whispered: "Mannie, you ought to see the purty uniform you'll war!"

## IV

TWELVE months had passed and the war was ended. Spring was bursting forth on the mountain; brooks, freed from their wintry silence, babbled gayly down the hillsides, from the warm, soft earth violets peeped forth and laurel buds began to swell. A tremulous flutter ran through the young leaves — all nature stirred, throbbed like a beautiful woman reviving from a swoon.

On a pleasant hillside, in the midst of this radiant verdure, was a newly cleared patch of land and on it a well built, carefully sealed log cabin with windows and doors. The scene of much fun and merry making as well as work, it had been built in Mannie's absence by his neighbors as a tribute to his patriotism. The Mission had drawn sufficiently from its scanty funds to furnish it. In return for this Corabel was pledged to keep it, as the Mission Lady had taught her and also to teach her neighbors the new methods of cookery, cleanliness and care of children.

On this bright Spring morning Corabel left the Mission house before dawn and by sun up was bustling with housewifely pride about her new abode. On the shining kitchen stove a great dinner was in the process of cooking. Seated upon a gayly colored rug that Corabel had made, the baby, spic and span, prattled noisily to her home made doll. There was in Corabel's flurried movements, in her anxiety for her daughter's continued cleanliness, indeed, in the very bubbling and boiling of the kettles on the stove, an air of excited expectancy.

From time to time little Miss Effie's startling proximity to the stove obliged the mother to turn from her culinary occupations and carry the baby to the farthest corner of the room.

"Quit keepin' such a fuss," she would exclaim; then in kindlier tone, "here's some more play pretties. Now stay clean till your daddy comes."

Presently women in freshly starched gingham aprons and bright colored sun bonnets, men in their Sunday best and children miscellaneously dressed began to appear, each with an offering for the house warming.

"Hit's a fine day for Mannie's home coming," Bug Gentry said, depositing a kettle of apple butter upon the table.

"Yes," Corabel beamed, "Mannie always did favor the Spring. You're all powerful good to us," she said as another neighbor placed a bucket of lard before her.

A great commotion in the door way drew the attention of the women in that direction. In the opening stood Mathy Crane, a great, wallowing hog at his side. Mathy, who had successfully evaded the draft because he had a wife and family to support — though he never supported them:

"Bein' as I couldn't go to the war I thought I'd give Mannie this here hog," he said, sheepishly.

Bug Gentry leaped at him like mountain fire.

"Take that thar hog out'n here," he cried. "You never seen no hog in the Mission House and this here cabin is goin' to be kept like the Mission. Do you think we been workin' to make it look purty for your hog?"

Corabel thanked him and explained more kindly that hogs and such did not promote household cleanliness.

Under Corabel's supervision the women busied themselves with laying the tables while the men and

children entertained themselves in the yard. Toward noon the shout went up that Mannie was coming and the occupants of the cabin spilled themselves out into the already crowded yard.

Up the winding path toward the cabin the Conquering Hero came, overseas bag and a German helmet slung across his saddle. In his uniform, straight of back, head erect, clear eyed, he made a handsome picture.

"Now ain't he somebody!" Bug Gentry cried in admiration. Corabel's heart throbbed with pride. He was her man! He had come back to her — at last the months of waiting and working in loneliness were at an end! She thought her heart must burst with happiness — she trembled at the thought of his kisses — longed to be held close in his arms again, but she made no outward sign of these emotions. Standing stoically in the doorway, her baby clinging to her skirts, she permitted the others to welcome him first.

There was no profusion in any of the greetings; they would have been just as hearty, just as cordial had Mannie only returned from a day's journey across the mountain. His woman's faithfulness, his neighbors' generous work — these were the manifestations of their love and welcome. What need of tears and kisses and laughter?

They examined with childish curiosity his uniform and war trophies, listening in awed silence to his tales of battle. Mannie was at heart an honest fellow, but who can blame him, before such a blindly credulous audience, for a touch of exaggeration and braggadocio?

"I larnt sompin' 'sides fightin' out to the war," he said, when half of the guests were seated at the long dinner table and the others, waiting their turn to be served, crowded eagerly about. "I larnt a heap 'bout books an' farmin' an' when thar's bullets buzzin' around your head thar ain't no time fer believin' in spuks an' spells. The farmin'll come in handy on this place you've cleared fer me." Here Mannie tried to speak a few words of appreciation for the cabin and their gifts, but it would take time and kindly deeds to prove the full gratitude he felt. "If you want I'll show you 'bout plantin' crops in turn so's to keep the soil good," he ended chokingly.

"And Miss Effie's goin' to let me help teach the Mission School."

The Mission Lady beamed upon her handiwork.

Recovering from his modesty and embarrassment, he continued:

"Hit was a lucky night fer me when Corabel went with Miss Effie to the Speakin', fer if she hadn't I'd never of known nothin' 'bout the way them Germans fit an' I wouldn't a' wanted to go to war no more than some folks on this here mountain and I wouldn't 'a' thought it was any business of mine." There was no malice in his words, simply they were an acknowledgement that he understood and did not blame his less patriotic neighbors. "Hit gave me a chance to see a powerful lot of this country and England and France and Germany." As he spoke these mighty words to his frankly bewildered audience he could not conceal an expression of superiority. "Oh, they're all on the map —I'll show them to you some day at the school house," he volunteered. "They're tolerable big countries, but America's bigger than any of 'em — and better — an' we're all Americans — sure 'nough Americans!" Mannie's eyes shone and his voice swelled with exaltation for "out yonder" he had discovered that he and his people were a part of a great nation. A faint rustle through the crowd showed the first dawnings of a new dim pride. "I'm glad to git back to America and back to our mountain, fer let me tell you," and here he flung his arms out in a native gesture, "thar ain't nothin' over here ner over there like old Cricket Hollow an' I'm goin' to stay here 'till I die out!"

## Sappho's Song

By Edwin Markham

Out of Egyptian sands the impassioned cry!
Once long ago great Sappho loved and told
The grief of love, the sorrow never old:
She traced it on papyrus for his eye:
He laught and lightly tost the lyric by:
It went at last to wrap a mummy shape:
So in that land where the Colossi gape,
The wild song slumbered under the Sphinx's thigh

When spades from London hurled away the doom
Of gray dust lying on the hidden tomb,
The darkness rendered up the moldered parts:
Then from the ribs of the dead they tore the leaf,
When suddenly the song of Sappho's grief
Cried over the world to shake a million hearts!



Early in the evening the youngest of the children were put to sleep in the cabin, while the remainder of the company danced and played riotous games in the moonlit yard.

On the wood pile Mathy Taylor sat strumming his banjo, two youths joining their voices to the tune:

*"Lips like cherries,*
*Cheeks like the rose.*
*How I love the pretty girls,*
*God in Heaven knows."*

In the doorway of their cabin, arms entwined, stood Corabel and Mannie. Corabel's face was radiant, a proud light shone in her eyes. Mannie was indeed the equal of any American "out there."

"Corabel," Mannie whispered, roughly tender, "out thar to the war I nearly went to Glory and if I had I'd 'a' axed Saint Peter ef I couldn't come back an' fetch a woman angel that was waitin' fer me in ole Cricket Hollow."

*A wilderness monarch raised his head; great black shaggy bulls by the hundred stood*

# The Renaissance of the Buffalo

MY guide and I had driven for three hours through the Canadian Government's buffalo park at Wainwright in Alberta without sighting a single bison. Yet there are 4,820 buffalo — the largest herd in the world — enclosed within the park's fences.

Hunting the largest herd of buffalo in the world for the mere pleasure of seeing it was not without its thrills. We apparently had left civilization behind when we passed the warden's bungalow with its little village of barns and outhouses at the gate. We jogged in our buckboard along dim trails that once had been followed by settlers in their prairie schooners and by the fur brigades of the Hudson's Bay Company. The $100,000 mesh-wire fence nine feet high that surrounds the 107,000 acres of the park was never once in view.

The rolling prairie landscape spread out on all sides just as it was in aboriginal days. It was emerald green with summer verdure. We passed many little gemlike lakes whose circling beaches were white with a deep incrustation of alkali which at a distance suggested the continuous breaking of surf. About the margin of these dainty crystal pools were coppices of fir trees and aspens with ghostly-white boles and delicate silver leaves that shivered in every breath of air. Behind the tangled screen of bullrushes and tall muskeg weeds and grasses in the shore shallows, wild ducks paddled with their fledgling broods. A range of sand-hills with great bare yellow scaurs rose to the south. Cottonwood timber traced the course of Ribstone creek in its meanderings through the park.

Though after three hours of driving we had not been rewarded with the glimpse of a single animal, signs became plentiful. We ran upon fresh wallows dug out of the turf with horn and hoof, where the bison rolled in the cool earth. Leading toward the river drinking holes were occasional narrow trails six inches deep worn by the buffalo tramping in single file.

Topping a sweeping prairie billow, we saw at last a great lone bull pasturing majestically in the midst of a wide green meadow. He did not see us at first. Then the man-scent must have reached him down a slant of wind and he lifted his great, shaggy, lion-like front and stared at us. If an artist could have caught the old wilderness monarch in that sudden tense pose he would have had a wonderful picture. But two men in a buckboard plainly were not worth more than a passing contemptuous glance and the kingly brute lowered his head nonchalantly and went on feeding.

A half mile farther on, we frightened three bulls from their noontide siesta under a clump of cottonwoods. They rose on their front legs first like horses — cattle rise on their hind legs — and with loud snorts went tearing around the sand-hills. Diving over a sharp rise we came upon a buffalo bull lying directly in our trail chewing his cud as peacefully as some old barnyard cow. Our sudden appearance almost on top of him sent him into a panic. The ponderous beast got to his feet with amazing agility and made off at a lumbering gallop. He did not stop at a safe distance to turn and survey us. He never looked back, but held a straight course toward the horizon. The prairie sod in torn particles flew from

*sleepily stamping an occasional hoof and switching their tails to keep the flies away*

# By Walter Noble Burns

beneath his heels. Through patches of wolf willow and blackberry briars he crashed thunderously. The glutinous gumbo of a stretch of swampland had no power to slacken his speed. At times he disappeared into some shallow vale only to reappear on the farther slope at the same mad gallop. He had dwindled to a speck when he finally disappeared still running.

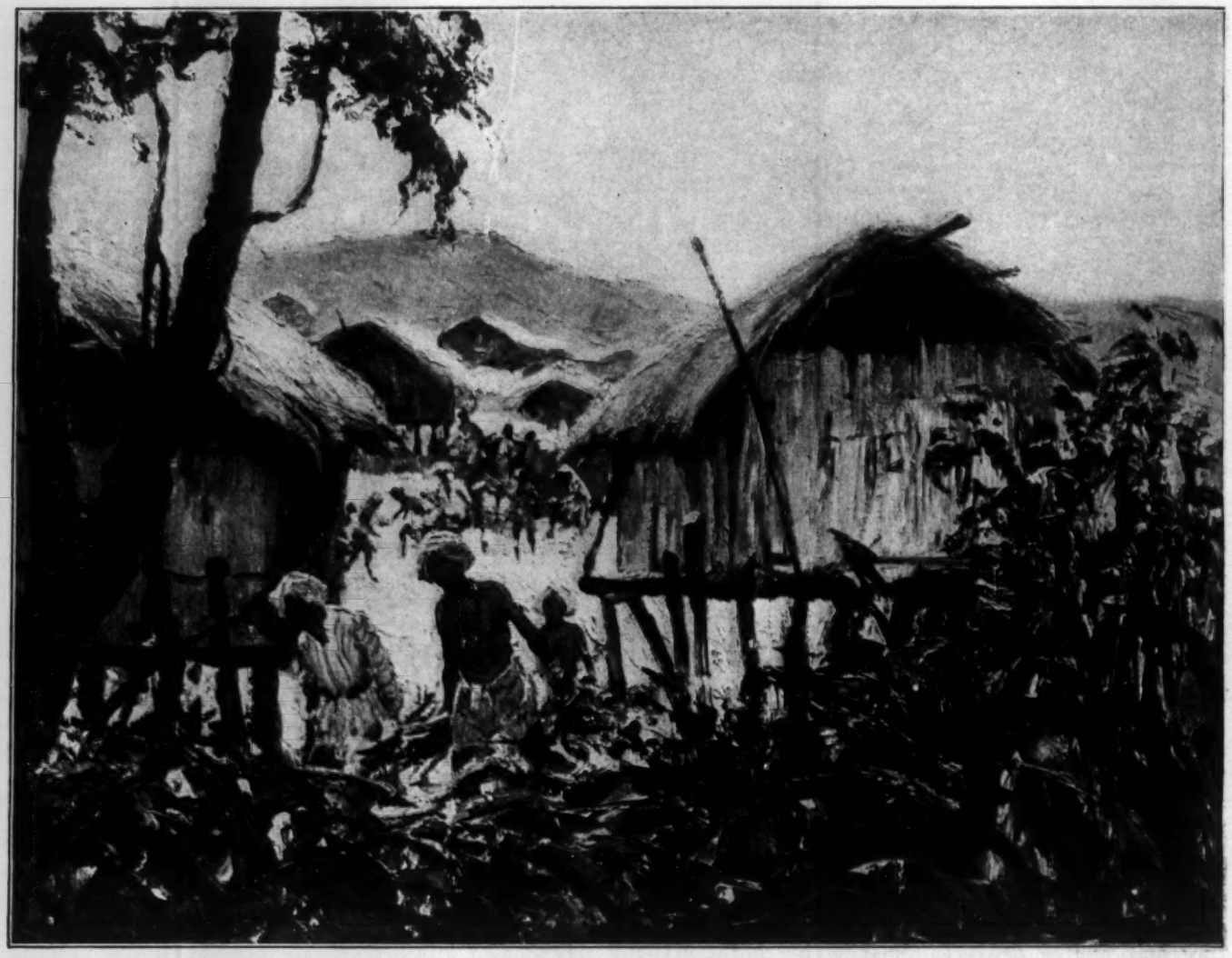
Outposts and stragglers of the herd became more numerous. A small warlike cow took her stand in our trail and snorted defiance. Shaking her horns at us and pawing a stream of earth over her back, she seemed on the point of charging. Then she changed her mind and trotted off to one side. Among some wolf willows we caught sight of a yellow object upon the ground — her new-born calf that had inspired her display of mother courage . . . Nine buffalo appeared lying and standing about a pot-hole of rain water. . . . Eleven single-filed over the brow of a hill toward a creek. . . . Seventeen pastured on a slope shaded with sparse fir and spruce trees. . . .

We drew rein on a little rise. There before us was the herd. In a coulee sprinkled with tall cottonwoods, the animals were spread over a wide area, taking their noontide rest and chewing the cud of contentment after their foraging in the morning pastures. How many there were it was impossible to count. They did not number all the bison in the park. Other small herds were widely scattered, to say nothing of straggling bands that followed the leadership of independent bulls. But it was the main herd and, at a venture, there were three thousand buffalo within the sweep of my glance.

Great black shaggy bulls by the hundred stood sleepily stamping an occasional hoof and switching their tails to keep the flies away. Cows were suckling their calves. Young bulls with horns that were still mere spikes, their shoulders just beginning to show a suggestion of shagginess, swaggered about with an air of adolescent braggadocio. There were calves of all ages. Little fellows perhaps a day or two old, of the golden tawny tint of new saddle leather, with heads much too big for their gaunt bodies, staggered shakily on spindle legs or nudged blindly at maternal founts. Older youngsters romped with one another, kicking up playful heels and cocking their heads with a look of good-natured stupidity. Half the herd at least was lying down.

The picture was unforgetable. It was as if the clock had been turned back half a century. Here before my eyes was the traditional West that the pioneers knew. I breathed the air of old romance. From the distant sand-hills, I half expected to see a band of Indians in buckskin and feathers come dashing out across the sun-bathed prairies on pinto ponies. I listened for the crack of their rifles. . . .

Wainwright Park is on the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, now a part of the government owned transcontinental railway system, and was established in 1909. It was stocked with 748 buffalo, of which 631 were purchased from Michael Pablo, a half-breed Indian who had bred them on the open range on the Flathead Indian Reservation in Montana. When the reservation was thrown open to settlement, it was necessary for Pablo to sell his herd. He offered it to the United States, which declined to buy. The Canadian government jumped at the opportunity and took the majority of the buffalo then in existence in the United States across the boundary. (*Continued on page* 99)



*The corn and the whispering bamboo grew close about the little, wretched houses; the tall grass*

# Velvet Feet

## By Helen Topping Miller

ON THE morning when the blind leper was found behind his matting door curtain, with his throat open and the long sinister slash of a panther's sign across his plague-eaten chest, the old doctor sat down in the little cuddy which served him for an office and wrote a pathetic appeal to the proper authorities for a detachment of shikari, with guns.

The office smelled of drugs, but this odor was reminiscent chiefly, since there were never enough medical supplies any more to give off a tangible smell. There was never enough of linen either, nor of surgical bandages, nor of money, for this mission station lost in the high grass between the Godavari and the Pranhila was very remote from the penny-hoarding children and praying women who supported it, and being remote was easily forgotten.

There was never enough of anything, unless it was of the brown big-eyed widows with straight tow dresses and straw sandals, or of lean, brown children with legs like colts, and a distressing plenitude of sores shrieking for iodine and bichloride and precious gauze. Of these helpless ones there was always a heart-straining sufficiency.

The old doctor's hair was very thin on top and his face had the bloodless exalted look of the saints. He had been the medical missionary at Sironcha for nineteen years and at Jaipur for very long before that, and he had never yet seen enough of anything needful.

Mary Allen watched him as he wrote.

"The leper makes nine," she said, "counting the Rajput boy."

"The Rajput boy was a stranger," objected Caroline Wills.

"The panthers did not know that," countered Mary Allen cheerfully.

The old doctor looked at Mary. In her starched blue gown, darned in many places, she was like a tall sheaf of larkspur, with the gold of sun in her hair and her eyes like tawny brown butterflies in an old garden. Mary had been "out" only two years. The flat, unfriendly sun had not yet burned her to listlessness, the dry rasp of sedge and cane, the whisper of uplands where terror hid, the sinister sullenness of cities, old before Gethsemane, had not yet painted upon her youth the dull devoted mask of patience which Caroline Wills wore. The old doctor doubted a

*sloped upward to the hills from which the terror came stealing at night, velvet-footed, silent*

## Illustrated by J. E. Allen

bit, whether all the hidden mysteries of Indra and Gautama, all the age-old, simmering resentment of this ancient land of the Kanvas, could dim the glow in Mary Allen's eyes.

Mary had been reared in a North Dakota parsonage, and there was still much of the breath of prairie winds about her. She was as frank and unafraid as the brown beggar children themselves and at times as naïve. The saintly old father who had consecrated her, in infancy, to the foreign field, had spent his life too remote from the world and the flesh to realize that brown eyes with adorable lashes might be wasted on the heathen, or that a laugh like dancing water could take on the quality of pathos when it gladdened only the ears of low-caste hill people, despised of their own blood and wallowing apathetically in traditional squalor.

Caroline Wills was different. Caroline had been born a missionary, if such a thing is possible. Renunciation was written on her repressed lips, in her tired eyes, her calmly folded hands. You knew when you looked at her that she would make a flawless bed and offer a poetic and efficient prayer, that she locked her windows at night and believed nothing that any Hindu *budmash* might protest.

"Saijala came down again this morning," observed Caroline Wills, as the old doctor sealed his letter with melted wax, "she was terrified as usual. She found a clawed place outside her compound, and Dhulap imagined he heard snufflings around the house before dawn."

"Saijala ought to come in here and sleep at night," argued Mary Allen. "She could have a pallet in the hall and Dhulap could bunk in the kitchen."

"You can't have a chandala woman like Saijala about," protested Miss Wills, "unwashed — lower even than the beasts in the estimation of her own people."

"But you can't let even a chandala be eaten raw! And Dhulap is a precious child. Some day I'm going to bob his hair and make him some blue rompers with rabbits on them."

"You'd better disinfect him then, first."

"A baby! Only three — and his little back all twisted in a knot."

"The wages of sin," quoted Caroline Wills piously. "Even Saijala does not know who his father was. Are you going to have service this morning, Doctor Brown? It will take their minds off this dreadful affair of the leper."

The old doctor rose absently, fingering his letter.

"Ah — yes — I suppose so. Get me a runner, Mary

— no, wait a minute. We can't have service. We'll have to bury the leper, I suppose. Not one of them will touch him unless I make them. Are there any rubber gloves? You look, Mary — and then get the children inside where they can't hang about and stare. And get this letter off at once. They'll pay no attention to it likely, but there's always a chance."

Hope never died with the old doctor. Sometimes Hope grew anemic and refused nourishment and the blood of her turned to ice, but the old doctor carried her about and nursed her in his tired and patient old breast and fed her with the life of his heroic old soul, until she brightened and danced ahead of him again recklessly, like the thankless jig she was. He was like that, was the old doctor, and the two women who were his only helpers on this remote station loved him for it and showed their love in ways as diverse as their natures.

Mary Allen ran off without a word to find some dry old gloves and scrub them — to do the things he desired done. She found a brown, half-naked person named Rhamdath Singh, and him she dispatched to the railway with the letter, threatening him with all sorts of mild tortures if he failed to deliver it promptly. And then she herded all the staring children into the long building, which was school and church and hospital in one and kept them there for three hours, or until the decent obsequies of the leper could be celebrated — not by lecturing them sanctimoniously as Caroline Wills might have done, but by playing a foolish little game called "Next Door Neighbor," and by telling them a story of a lad named Philip who once fell off a roof in Jaffa because he was so intent on seeing the Jesus Sahib passing by.

That was the way Mary did it, and Caroline Wills, equally as devoted, stood her ground and scolded a great deal in horrified tones and berated the English and the natives and particularly the chandala who simply would not wash, and finally exclaimed, when she saw the old doctor rubbing on the gloves which Mary had soaped and softened, "You're not going to *touch* that dreadful creature?"

Whereupon the old doctor merely grunted. For he had been a long time in India and had learned a great many wise old proverbs, in that land of proverbs, one of which avers that the scolding of women is in a strong man's ears as the braying of she-asses.

Late in the afternoon, when the sun had bent its level sword of flame a little and tiny breaths of coolness were beginning to drift down from the hills, Mary Allen walked through the village, with three brown children pattering at her heels. The corn and the whispering bamboo grew close about the little wretched houses with their floors of clay and their flapping straw mats hung in the doorways, and behind them the tall grass sloped upward to the hills from which the terror came stealing at night, velvet-footed, silent, tiptoeing across galleries, thrusting aside the futile door-barriers, leaping with terrible claws and teeth — the panther.

Already dread had pinched the brown faces of the village people until the children wore an old intent look. In each house one watched all night, but the terror was sly. It had stolen a babe from the crook of its mother's arm, and every night somewhere a pitiful litter of gnawed bones was left to show where a poor man's goat or calf had been tethered.

In a little hut, sunk in a muddy hollow a little outside the village, lived Saijala, who had been a servant in an English military town. There were whispers concerning Saijala, and her soul was very bitter, so that even her own caste avoided her, but Mary Allen avoided nobody. In the muddy compound around the house, a tiny crippled boy was crawling, and as he saw Mary he came scuttling toward her with dreadful lurchings and eager little cries.

Instantly the group that followed Mary turned back. One of them muttered and spat into the dust. They were Hindus — and might not breathe the same air with the little chandala, Dhulap — who was in their childish minds lower than the jackals — lower even than the English!

"At least," thought Mary as she gathered the tiny Dhulap out of the mire and carried him gingerly to the house, "they did not scream and call dreadful names. I stopped that — though it took me two years."

A sombre-eyed woman came to the door of the stone hut, and looked with lips that twitched at Mary and the child. Dhulap was singularly beautiful, under his mask of grime. His eyes were large and dark and soft, with long lashes and a tiny, wistful mouth. Mary gave him a biscuit, which he ate shyly, picking every fallen crumb from the floor.

"You must come down to the mission to-night, Saijala," Mary said to the woman. "It is not safe for you out here — so far from everybody. Dhulap is as light as a pullet — the panther could easily carry him away."

Saijala frowned sullenly. She moved out of the doorway and pushed a stool near for the mission woman, but there was none of the eager greeting in her face that one saw in the eyes of the child.

"I like not the mission," she said, "I like not the praying woman who makes one use much soap, nor the doctor Sahib who sniffs and asks 'Hast thou had smallpox?' Nor do I like beds of a whiteness that one may not breathe upon them lest they be soiled."

"Perhaps," smiled Mary, "you prefer that your only son be eaten up by panthers? Is it because he is a cripple and may not grow up to be a credit to his mother?"

Saijala twisted her straight mouth. She had once been very beautiful, in a sensual, low-caste way, but now such comeliness as she had owned was lost in a sour bitterness that bent her black brows and lined her eyes.

"The panther shall not get him," she declared stolidly, "I shall take him on the roof tonight."

"Last night," Dhulap licked up the last crumb of his biscuit and looked adoringly into Mary Allen's face, "I heard — little breathings. Near!"

Saijala turned pale to greenness. In spite of her sulkiness it was apparent that she was smitten with deadly terror.

"Tonight," she repeated, "I shall take him on the roof."

"Cannot a panther leap to the roof?" Mary set the boy as nearly upright as his bent little body would permit, and pushed the soft tangled hair out of his eyes — hair a trifle too fair for purity of Hindu blood. "Why dost thou speak foolishness, Saijala." She spoke the soft hill dialect. "Thou shalt come to the mission."

"Little breathings," repeated Dhulap in a babyish whisper, "and claws scratching — scratching — like this." And he rasped his little nails on the foul stone of the wall.

"The doctor Sahib is right. Unless one washes much one is devoured by sore sickness. Look at thy son, Saijala. Groveling in mire. Art thou not ashamed?"

"No." Saijala was bitter. "No — I will not be washed and smelled at. Once at Cawnpore I lived

among the English. I know their clean bodies — and the foulness of their hearts — their lies. I like them not. Thou — blue one — thou art different. For thee I would do anything. But not for the praying woman. If thy Christ be like thee — well. But if he be like the praying woman who sniffs — then talk to me no more of thy Christ."

She flung about with a graceful movement of her proud, brown savage body, and lifting a pot from the hearth, peered into the bottom of it. Mary saw in it a sticky, smoky bit of food, sticking fast to the sides. Instantly Dhulap thrust his filthy little fingers in, digging at the stale remnant of the dinner.

Mary Allen went away, rather heavy in spirit.

"I wonder if it's any use," she thought, "this beating at the door of an old, old race, offering them a new code — a new philosophy, when they've been so long content with their Brahma and their Siva. Yet — Brahma and Siva haven't been able to stop the panther from eating their children. I wonder if the old doctor can — if they'll send him a troop of shikari?"

She crept into her clean spare bed at midnight, and lay still, listening. Out of the soundless black, which was India, inscrutable, proud, sinister — she seemed to hear the padding of soft velvet feet, slipping through the corn without moving one blade — creeping — creeping —

Mary felt choked and cold. North Dakota with the clean wind blowing out of the north and the stubble rustling, with heavy-footed silken muscled horses jolting comfortably along wide roads, seemed suddenly very far and very dear and very safe.

Then through the blackness there came a long, low desolate cry, ripping hollowly out of the night, quivering across the still, sleeping village, making her skin tighten and tingle as she sprang up tensely. Down the dark street lights flashed. There came yells and the barking of dogs. She heard the old doctor shouting from the gallery and the whimper of a child in the room kept for the sick. Caroline Wills came down the hall carrying her candle, dressed quite properly in a neat linen wrapper, her feet shod and her smooth hair brushed and coiled. Mary, tumbling disheveled out of her bed with all her yellow hair falling in her eyes, knew that Caroline Wills would appear like that if Gabriel's trump sounded suddenly in the night — neat, ready, self-possessed and unruffled.

"What was it?" she demanded. "What was that horrible cry?"

"The panther again, I suppose," said Caroline. "It sounded more animal than human. They have set deadfalls — perhaps one has been caught."

But the old doctor coming in then, with a shabby raincoat flapping about his naked old shins, had more direful news.

"It's Aksha-Anafgha. A beast snatched her child from her bed. She slept too soundly to miss it till now."

Again the high, hollow terrible cry shivered on the air. Mary Allen turned sick and limp.

"Surely," she said, "they will send the shikari — now!"

Caroline Wills shut her patient lips tight. The old doctor sighed.

"I have written a great many letters," he said, "but few of them have ever been answered."

But a week later when the village had sunk into the very apathy of terror, accepting the scourge of the panther with fatalistic numbness, Dhulap son of Saijala crawled squealing into the room where Mary Allen was teaching nine little brown sons of Siva the parable of the seed which fell among thorns.

"The soldiers!" shrilled Dhulap. "The soldiers!"

Instantly the school tumbled out the door into the muddy street. Mary Allen followed after, carrying the broken little lad, and watched the little troop of shikari, brown and sweating under their snowy turbans, ride up to the door of the mission. And ahead of them rode a young English officer, very lean and brown — a scowling, impatient person who flung off his horse sulkily.

At sight of Mary Allen he raised his eyes for an instant and a spark of interest lightened them, but it vanished quickly and Mary heard the impatient tone of his voice as he spoke to the old doctor. She dropped the surprised Dhulap into the dust and flew to the kitchen, where Caroline Wills was laboring with a stubborn cook over a matter of eggs and curry.

"O — come and behold!" Mary entreated, "come and see what Great Britain has condescended to send us! The grandeur that was Buckingham Palace and the insolence that was Scotland Yard! And spurs! Not to mention a helmet pipe-clayed until it makes you dizzy. Throw away your curry quick and make some Yorkshire pudding and roast beef. Look — he's coming in. He's younger than I thought at first, isn't he?"

"How can I tell?" demanded Caroline Wills, patiently. "How do I know how young you thought him at first?"

"It isn't age, it's arrogance," sighed Mary. "Will he expect us to kneel when he passes, I wonder?"

"What foolishness! He'll expect a bath, no doubt — and there isn't a boy in sight to pump water."

"They've all run after the shikari. How in the world shall we get it pumped? Chandu would be insulted if you suggested his waltzing that beam about — I could do it myself, but no Hindu would ever salaam to me again. Have we got a clean tablecloth? Have we? And can I open some of those preserves that came in the last barrel? Surely the military deserve the brandied peaches. He's going upstairs now. He'll expire in that stuffy little coop up there. Heavens, how he hates us! Observe his scornful lip!"

"How absurd!" declared Caroline Wills. "Your imagination is a dreadful overdeveloped faculty. I see nothing but a tired officer, rather young and sunburnt."

"You missed the look of absolute disgust he gave us. We're safe hereafter. Any degraded Sironcha panther will frizzle up and perish of sheer humility when it sees what's after it. Ride 'em, cowboy! The house boy has run after the sojers — and I'm going to wait on the table. Shall I kneel when I serve the soup, Miss Caroline? Or shall I simply look terrified — like that punkah boy the doctor brought back from Jaipur?"

But the look in Mary's dancing brown eyes was anything but terrified, when she served the soup, to old Doctor Brown and Captain Gilbert Morrison, late of the Twenty-Second Battalion, in the cool gallery where a green netting kept out the black flies and the sun. The look began with mischief, but when Captain Morrison rose very gravely and bowed at the old doctor's introduction, Mary held the hot tureen bravely, though her thumbs were flaming, and bowed her best, lowering her long lacy lashes. She went back to the kitchen slowly, and in silence. But her thoughts were racing.

"Why — he's a boy!" she said to herself. "Not much older than I am. That scar on his neck is from a bayonet. And somebody has hurt him — hurt his soul."

To Caroline Wills she said, quite casually, "He's

very sorry for us. He thinks we're a poor, deluded lot — trying to cram the Epistles down the throats of a sullen mess of heathen who would much rather have the Karma and sacrifices to Jinendra. Whenever I am around in his hearing I shall quote tracts industriously. Maybe I can convert one heathen before I die of despair."

"He says," this report came after the curry and the pullet, "that the Hindu has the oldest philosophy in the world, and that the Chinese have the oldest civilization in the world — but that neither race has ever gotten any good out of their ancient advantages. He thinks we're wasting our time — and that the sooner the panthers eat Chandu and all his brothers and sisters, the better."

"Hush," warned Caroline Wills, portioning the precious coffee carefully. "Chandu might hear you — and poison all of us."

"I want this little cake," replied Mary, blithely, "for Dhulap."

Captain Gilbert Morrison smoked interminably cigarettes on the gallery after dinner, while the old doctor was having prayers in the hospital. Mary, making the responses dutifully, was conscious of him out there, of his white linen magnificence, his beautifully polished boots, his handsome face with the restless look of bitterness upon it. The look in his eyes reminded Mary of Saijala.

"Perhaps some one has lied to him," she mused, as she hunted for hymn 459.

When the service was over she stole out the back door and ran through the hot dusk to Saijala's house. She wanted to be certain that Dhulap was safe, that his little hands were clean and his pitiful little back, which ached at night, rubbed with oil and anise. She carried the pink cake left from dinner in her hand. Dhulap cooed over the cake and gurgled with delight at the oil and anise and at Mary's warm, strong hands upon him. She left him, curled up warmly in a rug, on the flat roof, and when she reached the road again, Captain Gilbert Morrison was there, a chalky figure in the shadows, slapping his boots with his bamboo stick — manifestly waiting for her.

"Don't you know that you oughtn't to be out on this road after dark?" he demanded, without preamble.

Mary Allen had never learned the fear of the east, which sucks the color from the cheeks of white women and makes their eyes pools of dread. She had never learned fear of any sort, and to her the rustling grass beside the paths wore the innocent aspect of the stubble fields of Dakota.

"I come here every night," she said, quite meekly. "A widow lives in this house. She has a little cripple boy — a precious thing — he could not stir if the beasts attacked him. I want to be certain he is safe. Saijala is chandala — no one will help her but me."

"While I am in command here — while this village is under the military, I forbid you to walk on the roads alone at night."

Mary's eyes danced. Even in the dusk the glimmer of them was like fireflies among heather. "And suppose I refuse to obey?" she inquired.

"Then I shall be compelled to arrest you and confine you under guard."

"He *is* a boy!" thought Mary. Pompous, feeding some inward hurt with big words and cynicism. He was taller than she — square, straight, stern in the failing light.

"Wonderful," said Mary. "I should love being arrested. I would corrupt the guard — with smiles through the grating. Only — where would you lock me up? I don't believe there is a bolted door anywhere in Sironcha?"

"It would be impossible to corrupt the guard," stated Morrison, "for I should stand guard myself."

"And would you read the Epistles to me through my prison bars? Or the Karma perhaps?"

"I think I should read you the Upanishads — or the seven Vedic books terror."

"It wouldn't be any use. They've tried to make me afraid. But fear just won't stick to my mind, somehow. I'm hopeless."

"And still," he argued, "you try to make commandments stick in the minds of your chandala — your Dhulap."

"O — but that's different. Dhulap loves me. I glue 'thou shalt nots' into his little brain with love."

"There might be virtue in that," he admitted, "but once you are gone — "

"O — but I shan't be gone. This is my work — Dhulap and the others — this is my life."

"And you'd spend it — on these people?"

"Aren't you spending yours — on these people?" she inquired quickly. "And you do not come bringing peace — but the sword."

"That's different. I do this — for England."

"And I for — a better country."

"Very pretty. However, that doesn't alter the obstinate dullness and resentment of the Hindu. You can't make him over. As for his intelligence — I command shikari. What use to wear yourself out — trying?"

"At least there's credit in being worn out — trying. But there's no use trying to make me obey orders. I'm just not built that way. They've tried it — all of them. I'm always abjectly repentant — but the next time I just do the same thing over. Probably I'll be coming out here tomorrow night to see if Dhulap said his prayers. So perhaps you'd better lock me in the tower right away."

"Personally I deny the importance of Dhulap's prayers. My private opinion is that as soon as the cake is eaten — and you have departed — Dhulap says another set of prayers to placate the gods who were doubtless offended at the first lot. However — if you insist on coming out here — I'll come along with you."

The little fires of the shikari blinked along the roadside. Dark men squatted about them, springing silently to their feet as their officer passed, staring at Mary with their dead-black eyes. She tried to read a menace in these huddled, white turbaned figures, but to her eyes there was none. They were so childlike — so content with their little circle of warmth, their little pot of food. It was absurd. But the tall white figure beside her was very dignified and respectful. Captain Morrison was not flirting with a pretty missionary whose tongue wagged like a prayer-meeting bell. He was in deadly earnest.

"I cannot refuse the protection of the valor and chivalry of the army," said Mary, sweetly. "Thank you very much. I'll go in now."

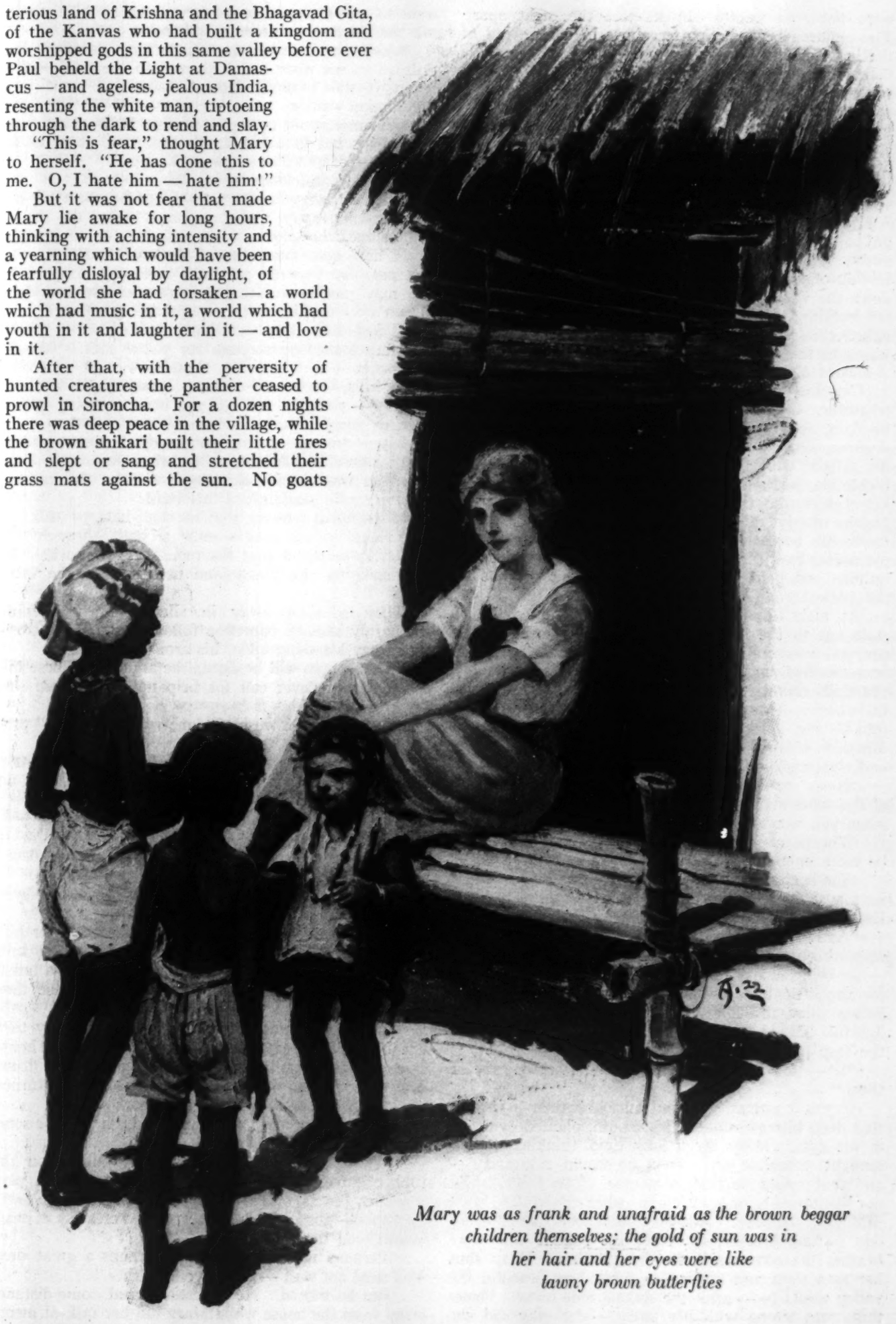
She ran down the hall, avoiding Caroline Wills. But in her own room her mood changed swiftly. She grew still. She crept into bed, and lay very straight, with the sheet under her chin. The darkness crept close outside, with the fires of the shikari like little glowworms curled in the shadows. And out of the dark and the silence Mary heard again the padding of velvet feet — creeping — creeping and to her ears the footfalls became the steps of the old, old India — the ancient, sullen, mys-

terious land of Krishna and the Bhagavad Gita, of the Kanvas who had built a kingdom and worshipped gods in this same valley before ever Paul beheld the Light at Damascus — and ageless, jealous India, resenting the white man, tiptoeing through the dark to rend and slay.

"This is fear," thought Mary to herself. "He has done this to me. O, I hate him — hate him!"

But it was not fear that made Mary lie awake for long hours, thinking with aching intensity and a yearning which would have been fearfully disloyal by daylight, of the world she had forsaken — a world which had music in it, a world which had youth in it and laughter in it — and love in it.

After that, with the perversity of hunted creatures the panther ceased to prowl in Sironcha. For a dozen nights there was deep peace in the village, while the brown shikari built their little fires and slept or sang and stretched their grass mats against the sun. No goats



*Mary was as frank and unafraid as the brown beggar children themselves; the gold of sun was in her hair and her eyes were like tawny brown butterflies*

were slain, no wailing shrieks tore the night apart. The children began to patter about boldly instead of darting fearfully from door to door. And meanwhile Gilbert Morrison sat on the mission gallery and read the week-old Calcutta papers, and smoked a great deal — and watched for Mary Allen out of the corners of his handsome eyes.

As for Mary, she kept a bit aloof. A great restlessness troubled her and she drugged it with heroic doses of duty. She taught the small brown, scornful boys with such fervor that they forgot which had been born Kshattriyas and which Sudra — and the Hindu can go no further than that. She sang, very clear and sweet, valiantly pumping praise out of the little old folding organ, while Captain Morrison stalked up and down the village street, and snapped at his shikari for not buckling their belts neatly and scowled at the half-naked children till they scuttled, big-eyed, out of his way and the mothers whispered bitterness against the dominant English.

Caroline Wills, scraping the meal barrel, saw nothing whatever. Caroline Wills hoped the panther would soon be slain, and the English officer and his dirty soldiers depart. But the old doctor, peering over the top of his glasses, while he rolled bandages or measured out bichloride, knew that another intruder had tiptoed on velvet feet into the mission — a tiny outlaw, utterly pagan, utterly ruthless. Watching Mary's eyes, like fireflies in heather, and her straight, sweet mouth the old doctor gave the carrier of the post two doses of raw quinine and paid no heed to the gagging protests of the patient.

At night, by various and devious routes, Mary stole out to the house of Saijala. Dhulap knew his prayers beautifully now, and his fair, fine hair had been washed and trimmed till he was an adorable chandala cherub, if one did not look at his piteous little back. Always she stayed till Dhulap was tucked into his rug, on the roof, and always she found Gilbert Morrison waiting in the road outside, smoking moodily and slapping his bamboo stick about.

"How," he demanded of her, "am I to put the fear of the white man into the souls of these Hindu dogs — when you won't obey yourself?"

"The panther may come back. Then we will all be meek enough."

"I'm beginning to be weary of your panther. There isn't a sign of him to be seen for four miles around. I've had every thicket beaten."

"And soon you'll ride away — hoping the beast will come down from the hills and devour us immediately — for being such a nuisance?" It was very dark. Save for the little hot fires of the shikari the road was a hollow alley through blackness, not aromatically delightful. Mary could not see the Captain's eyes, but the rasp of his voice had a scowl in it.

"So — you say things like that — like the rest of them?"

It was a woman who had hurt him then — written that deep bitterness about his mouth, planted cynicism in his eyes. Mary lay a long time, thinking, in her straight, monastic cot. Soon he would ride away — and that would be best, of course. The children did not like to study or learn hymns when the soldiers were drilling in the street. And half the school stole off every day to tag, breathlessly, after the shikari who were beating the countryside for the panther. Mary shut her eyes tight and refused to think how peaceful the valley would be — after the shikari rode away. Something was wrong with her lately — else why did she want to cry when she heard hymns sung? She would ask the old doctor for some quinine.

But in the morning the old doctor rode off to the railroad to see what had happened to the mail — and before it was properly light a naked lad came into the mission wailing.

"His mother is dying," Caroline Wills translated, her crimps hid in a black silk cap, "and there is no food. One of us will have to go, I suppose."

"I'll go," said Mary.

Morrison, very boyish in a bathrobe, with all his hair standing awry, flung a protest down the stairs. "Not alone," he said.

"I have gone many times," declared Mary, praying that her bare toes did not show under her wrapper — one may pardon ankles but bare toes are horrid — "I am not afraid. Certainly I shall go alone."

"I forbid it. You must have a guard."

Mary looked up through her yellow hair. "Would I be safer — with shikari? You are not in command of the hills, Captain Morrison. I shall go alone."

"No — you shall not. If you insist on going I shall go with you."

Mary dressed quickly in sturdy knickers and a khaki blouse and helmet. But when she came down Morrison was already drinking coffee on the gallery, a service rifle standing by his chair.

"Miss Wills tells me that we shall have to walk."

"There is no road — only a path through the thicket. And after that the rocks. A horse would be maddened by the flies — and useless after the third mile."

They tramped away in silence, Mary keeping stubbornly ahead. Morrison followed, the old doctor's emergency kit slung under his arm.

"The woman will be dead," he argued. "These hill people would never call for help unless the case was desperate."

"But even then we have done what we could," protested Mary.

"You've risked fever in a jungle — and exhaustion and heat — for an unwashed peasant who will spit on the ground when you pass!"

"Perhaps," said Mary.

"And you've gained — nothing."

"They come to us. It took Doctor Brown eleven years to teach them to do that."

"I can teach a shikari to obey my voice in eleven minutes."

"But — can you turn your back on him after he's learned it? I could have come alone into these hills today. No one would hurt me — unless it were a beast. I am the 'blue one' — they obey me — because they love me."

The Captain was silent. They came directly to a hut half hid in caya trees. From out of the house came sounds of wailing and the beat of a sad little drum. The sick woman was indeed dead. Morrison turned away from the fetid place in disgust.

"Don't touch her," he commanded, "it may be some sort of plague."

"What of that?" inquired Mary, pulling on the rubber gloves. "I can do other things besides play 'Precious Jewels' on the organ, Captain."

"But — good Lord! The wretched creature is dead. What good does it do?"

"Perhaps none at all. And perhaps a great deal. You need not wait — unless you'd rather."

But he waited. He sat cross legged, some distance away from the house while Mary did her task of mercy

and cleansed the place and admonished the huddle of dazed natives who crouched about. It was dusk when at last Morrison slung the emergency kit again over his shoulder.

"We must walk fast," said Mary. "There are fevers in these thickets at night."

They tramped side by side through the tangled trail, and down the rough pathway over the rocks. Morrison helped Mary down the steep places, and if his voice was a bit husky afterward Mary decided that the mist which stole out of the jungle made most white men hoarse. For herself she wanted nothing except to rub out that bitter line of unbelief between his brows. Once, as they struck into the darker, shadowed path, a little beast crept out inquisitively, and then drew back spitting.

"He smells the drugs," Mary explained, "I used so much back in that dreadful house. The beasts hate it — and the doctor will weep when he sees what I have done to his supplies. When I first came out I sickened at the smell. But — one grows used to everything."

"I don't," Morrison declared, "and I spent two years in a German prison camp."

Mary looked up quickly. That was part of it then. Some tragic things, she remembered, had happened to the Twenty-Second Battalion.

"And when I got out," he went on, with a trace of irony in his tone, "I found that a chap I had trusted had got me reduced in rank — and they sent me out here. Some rotten politics got into the army after the Armistice."

"And it was then that you decided that there was nothing but selfishness anywhere in the world?"

"No — not then — later. When I went back home and found that a young curate who wrote free verse had stolen my girl."

So — it *was* a woman. "Was she a pretty girl?" asked Mary, in a very small voice.

"I thought so — then," said Captain Morrison. And he added, "She had brown hair."

Something in his voice made Mary Allen's cheeks burn. She walked faster. Dark was coming down, like a hand bent over the world, shutting out the light. The thicket was dense and the smell of the rivers seeped through, mud and fish and sewage. All about it was still, with a hushed, forced sort of stillness, as though something sinister had just passed by.

Mary glanced over her shoulder. It seemed to her that footsteps were padding after them — velvet feet — menacing — wary. A scent was in the air too — not tangible, yet her nostrils involuntarily stiffened and her skin tightened. She felt cold. Unconsciously she held out her hand. Gilbert Morrison took it in his own.

"Mary," he said.

"Wait," she whispered, "I heard shouting — and a shot."

"My fellows. Something's turned up."

Then it was that Mary Allen saw the eyes — amber-flaming — glittering circles of gilt burning through the bushes ahead. And beneath the eyes a bit of blue — a pitiful, fearful scrap of blue — rompers — with rabbits on them.

She pressed her fingers tight, fighting down a scream. Morrison's fingers gripped her arms.

"Hush," he whispered, very close, "Don't move. I'll get him."

But Mary leaped, dragging the rifle down.

"You can't!" she cried, "Don't you see? It's Dhulap — my little crippled boy — "

"Good God!" The Captain of shikari marked then the glimmer of fair hair under the claws of the crouched beast. For an instant they stood, tense — helpless — while the panther lashed his tail and snarled but kept guard over his pitiful quarry. Then like a flash Mary snatched at the emergency kit.

"Formaldehyde!" she cried. "Quick!"

Instantly Morrison understood. An instant later a suffocating stream of deadly vapor blinded the nostrils and flaming eyes of the animal so that it toppled back, clawing and dazed. Morrison's rifle barked once. The panther contorted in a writhing mass of fur and claws. At that moment the shikari burst out of the thicket, shouting, bearing lanterns with all Sironcha clamoring after.

But Mary Allen did not see. She saw nothing but the piteous little huddle of fair hair and blue rompers and pale, soft little throat marred by the hideous scrawl of rending claws. She clutched the tiny body and sobbed over it, while little scarlet trickles stained her wrists and her breast. She did not see Caroline Wills rushing up, in breathless disarray for once, white-faced, voluble.

"He was playing in the street. It was so quick. Just a leap — Saijala screamed and the soldiers ran — but the thing was too swift — "

"O, my baby," wailed Mary Allen, "my little, little laddie — "

She staggered a few steps along the trail carrying the tiny burden.

Then Morrison overtook her. She looked into his face because it was a face transfigured. She listened to his voice — it was a voice purged of irony, vibrant with humility — and with a golden quality that went deep into Mary's heart and set little birds to singing there.

"Let me carry him, Mary," said the Captain of shikari. "Let me — dear. Mary — I — I am chandala too."

# A Negro Named Jones

## *How an institution that started with a handful of pupils sitting on a log under a tree grew into the remarkable industrial school at Piney Woods*

*Companion article to "Inchin' Along," in the April* McClure's, *described by one of our readers as "a human document, so pathetic I don't see how the most inimicable could fail to be touched by the struggle of those black people for an education"*

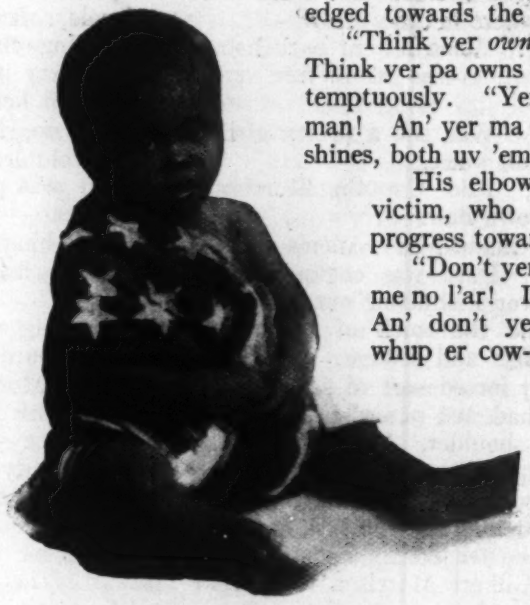
## By Alma and Paul Ellerbe

THE Supersupreme Court in the United States is public opinion. And the educated and most intelligent Negroes haven't had adequate representation before it.

The shiftless, kindly, humorous, flamboyantly picturesque Negroes have. Their cause has been plead by able writers in stories that are a charming and integral part of American literature, that have done them and us an invaluable service by teaching us to smile where we might have been weak and ignorant enough to hate.

But it is not with the Uncle Remuses, the Uncle Edinboros, the Uncle Romes of the nation, if there be any left, that the Republic will deal when it deals with the race, but with a large body of enfranchised colored citizens of the United States, alert and at last aware of their political and industrial entity, determined and competent to translate their needs and hopes into political and industrial action.

This account of one of them is submitted as a human document. We ask that the individual with whom it is concerned be considered, if the court please, as a representative of his class, as a kind of *prima facie* evidence that there are others like him.



*Our country's colors*

On a hazy blue and white summer morning during the era when juvenile male America went about — proudly or apologetically, according to its taste and temperament — in the garb of Little Lord Fauntleroy, a small Negro boy stood sunning himself outside the Pacific Hotel in St. Joseph, Missouri.

His tightly-fitted trousers were patched, and there had been a time when the black cloth of which they were made had draped the decorous shoulders of an old lady his mother "went out to serve," but they were undeniably of velvet, his white blouse had a frilled collar, his molasses-candy-colored face was clean, and altogether the elements were so mixed in him as to constitute a perfect challenge to Egg Eye, whom the fate that rules the destinies of small boys brought around the corner.

The excess of Egg Eye's emotion stopped him. He lifted one rusty black leg like a heron.

"Why, it's *Mister* Jones!" he said in a kind of cackling crow. Then he came on, hopping and scraping and sidling, his elbows sticking out like wings, and the other boy braced himself to meet something for which the experiences of his four and a half years had left him unprepared.

"Think y're smart, don't yer, stan'in' eround hyeh in yer Sunday clo's? Wid sneaked-on patches on yer britches! Li'l' teenty sewin' yer think nobody cain't see! Huh! When *my* ma slaps er patch onto my britches she don't keer who sees it!"

His bare feet improvised an intimidating shuffle that set his amorphous rags to flapping.

"Don't yer call me no l'ar! Don't you cheep!"

The smaller boy in the velvet trousers gazed at him and breathed hard, but he didn't cheep. He edged towards the open door.

"Think yer *owns* dis hyeh *ho*tel, don't yer? Think yer pa owns it! Pfough!" He spat contemptuously. "Yer pa's jes' er po' workin' man! An' yer ma too! Jes, po', hardworkin' shines, both uv 'em!"

His elbow shot out and jabbed his victim, who gasped and continued his progress towards the door.

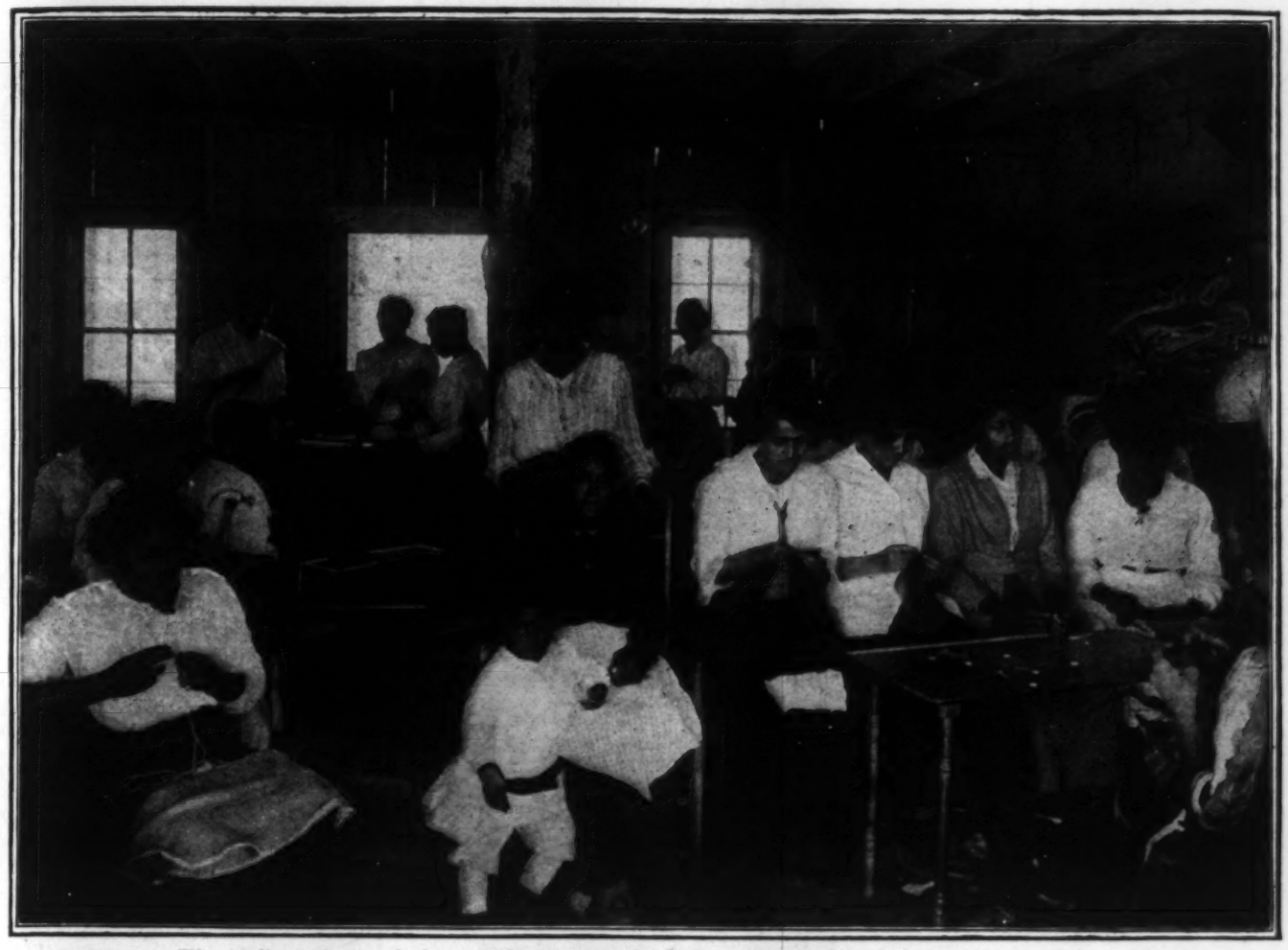
"Don't yer *look* lak yer wanted to call me no l'ar! I don't tek dat off'n nobody! An' don't yer gimme no lip! I c'u'd whup er cow-pen full of niggers lak you an' not know I'd done nothin'. Don't yer——"

But Egg Eye saw some one coming and took to flight, shouting as he ran, "You all's jes' plain niggers lak de rest uv us!"

And confirmed in his knowledge that whatever he was or wasn't he was not the kind of nigger Egg Eye was, Laurence C. Jones got himself into the side door of the Pacific Hotel and was safe.

The incident presented a minor crisis because he did think his father (who was head porter there) owned the Pacific Hotel. The way he dealt with it is characteristic; it was quite beyond him, and he edged out of it. He has shown a fondness ever since for methods that will work.

It is a sorry and a shameful thing that black Americans who would prosper must be prepared to forswear directer American ways and edge out of one predicament after another all their lives. But some



*The girl's industrial class includes everything from manual training to shoe-mending*

of the sorriness and the shame are inherent in the situation and are not properly chargeable to anything but a bitter fate. They and we are confronted by a condition and not a theory. But those of them who are in the long run more useful than harmful to their race — for many are both — are those who, when they have to, edge with a finer courage than their antagonists possess, and so preserve the indispensable good will of their white fellow citizens. Others, scornful and gifted and foredoomed to failure, may make a little literature that will wring hearts that long to help, but it is they who render our longing sterile, and they who do the most to put back the clock.

The Negroes' true hope does not lie in reiterating the full bitterness of their situation; in unpacking their hearts with useless, mordant, dangerous words; in calling upon their fellows, because they have suffered at the hands of white men, to swing with them into the old vicious circle and deal out suffering in return; in futile and pathetic talk of "whipping the white race into line!" But in reasonableness and patience, in awakening our sense of justice and our shame. For, however disgraceful and pitiful the fact may be, in the hollow of *our* hand their fortunes lie.

It is because Laurence Jones knows these things that it seems to us profitable to record some of the facts in the life of this "sun of Onest John Jones, use to be a solger, Potah at Pacific Hotel. Old cumpuny K onnabel disscharge"; (so Laurence himself wrote down proudly on the fly leaf of his reader); principal now and founder of the Piney Woods Country Life School for Negroes at Braxton, Mississippi; graduate of the University of Iowa; Chautauqua lecturer, and worker with his Mississippi white friends and black in anything that tends toward the solution of as difficult a problem as ever perplexed a civilized country.

Honest John, an ex-slave as well as an honorably discharged soldier, seems to have been a man of homely wisdom and sound judgment. When Egg Eye's cataclysmic charges were explained to him, he restored his small son's world to his placid *statue quo ante* by dealing with them seriously and intelligently.

"So that's the big question, is it: Do I own this hotel? Well, son, I own *my part* of it. An' you can always count on your ol' dad ownin' his part of anything good that's round about him."

Starting out in life as the property of a dissolute owner who left him to blow about in the winds of circumstance like a piece of human waste, he felt that he had traveled far and achieved much in getting his job at the hotel. He considered himself cut out for a porter and fortunate in having found his niche. Doubtless there were much higher positions, but he did not covet them, and he told his son that to be the right man in the right place was a good enough job for anybody.

Jones's lucky streak of invaluable Negro humor seems to have come mainly through him. The debt of the United States to the peculiar quality and the quantity of that racial humor is very great. What white man could tell, as Jones does, how he was forced by the local "peckerwoods" (the Negro's name for the backwoods whites he doesn't like) to get off his horse and walk because his kind weren't allowed to ride in that locality, and tell it with sincere appreciation of the ridiculous figure cut by himself?

Lack of courage? But the trait involved is racial, and it is a matter of permanent record that the race is courageous. Besides, he was one against the countryside. No, that trait has nothing to do with courage. And it is one of our national assets. If it were withdrawn to-morrow morning, the nation would suffer acutely from the lack of it before sunset.

John Jones tried also to make his son honest, God-fearing and humble.

"You drivin' mos' too big a team to-day," he'd say soberly at any touch of smart-alecking or sassiness. "It's about to run away with you. Show-off and Show-out is two bad hosses. Can't have 'em roun' this hotel a-tall. Nope! Not a-tall!"

His mother also wanted him to be honest, and above everything else God-fearing, but she didn't bother so much about the humbleness. She was sure that he was intended for the ministry, or "to get into Congress," and in either, she argued, a too meek spirit wouldn't be an asset.

She inherited shrewdness and vigor from a grandfather who, while still a young man, bought his freedom from his owner in Virginia, went north, and because the public schools in his locality were closed to Negroes, founded a school of his own; and from the Dutch woman he married there, who became her grandmother.

*Piney Woods students at work*

She was keenly conscious of the carefully tended prejudice against the Negro that flourished around her, and of the heart-breaking obstacles in that lifting trail where she was guiding her son's footsteps even while he still wore the velvet trousers. She was a fine seamstress, and she went out by the day to sew, and at night served as ladies' maid at balls and parties and dinners.

While his mother was away Aunt Liza, an old Negro woman of the neighborhood, stayed with the children, introducing another element into their lives.

Aunt Liza would put them early to bed, turn down the lamp, — it saved eyesight, she said, not to have "bright an' shinin' lights," and, besides, it was "more accordin' ter scripter," — tilt back her favorite low straight chair on its hind legs, and rocking slowly and tapping time softly with her foot, would indulge her taste for song or prayer.

On a wild or dreary night she always raised the same tremulous query, sent it searching forth on the wavering wings of a lonesome and mournful tune:

"An-n' am I a-borned to-oo die,
To-oo a-la-ay this a-body down?"

Then she would pause, as though expecting the night to answer her, sigh, as though disappointed that it did not, and go on in her thin, clear, trembling soprano:

"An'n' mus' my-y tremberlin' sperrit a-fly
Un-n-to-oo a wurld unknown?"

On other nights, without prelude, her song would ring out triumphantly:

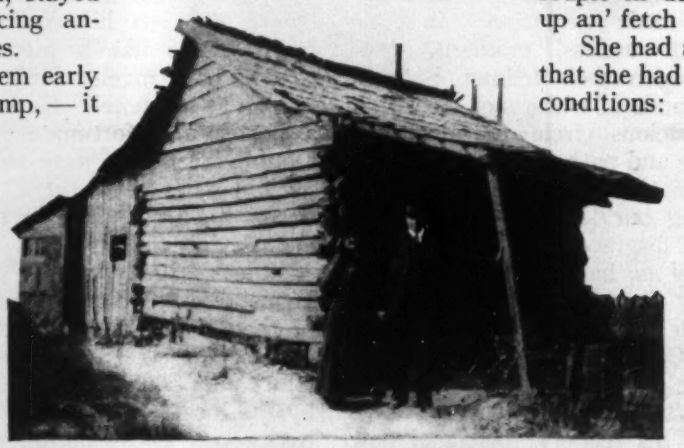
"Jes' look yander a-what I see!
Hise de winder, let de dove come in!
"A band uv angels a-comin' fer me!
O, hise de winder, let de dove come in!"

And as she sang she would throw back her head and laugh, and hug herself ecstatically, her face raptly shining, her body shaken with joyous tremors; her arms would thresh the air in a steady rhythm, she would clap her hands and stamp her feet and finally the crescendo of her delirium would sweep her out of her chair, cause her to fling away her work-basket and send her marching, wheeling and curveting about the room, pushing the furniture roughly out of her way and tasting an exotic joy that Anglo-Saxons never know.

Then — after a while — hearing the little Laurence turning in his bed, she would call softly:

"Is you 'wake, honey? I'se been off a-jubilatin' in my soul, an' dat ornery, yaller-eyed cat done ketched up my basket an' tuck it 'way back under de bed. You souple in de j'ints — wished you'd git up an' fetch my quilt pieces an' things."

She had a store of "Bible teachin's" that she had edited with an eye for local conditions: "Thou shelt steal neither sugar ner jelly ner nothin' else." "Honor yer pappy an' yer mammy, an' don' be sassin' an' talkin' back, 'caise chillun should be seed an' not hyeard." "Thou shelt not tell lies an' b'ar false witness erginst thy neighbor, little sisters ner nobody." And: "When somebody fetch yer er clip on one er yer cheeks, turn de other one, an' ef he fetch yer er clip on dat one, den



*The old slave cabin that stood where Dulany Hall now stands housed in turn the grist mill, the electric light "plant," and the blacksmith shop*

de Lawd be wid de righteous!"

Jones was to find that it was occasionally necessary for each of his cheeks to do duty several times. But he was to find, too, that there were ways of turning them, and ways of using one's time while waiting for the help of the Lord.

Along with and between grammar school, high school and university, he shined shoes, shook out excelsior for mattresses, worked in a planing mill, fired stationary boilers, waited at table, acted as janitor, and did any odd job that he could find, in St. Joseph, Missouri; Rock Island, Illinois, and Cedar Rapids, Marshalltown and Iowa City, Iowa.

The interim between the days of the velvet trousers and his graduation from the University of Iowa was sufficiently varied, industrially and geographically, to awaken him to a consciousness of the complexity and the instability of the relationship of himself and his race to the country of which he found himself a part. It was a relationship which required continual nice readjustment. In the midst of peace he was in war. Missouri, Illinois, and even Iowa, are not different from our other forty-five states in this: that always for the Negro just on the other side of a wavering line there is trouble. Jones stepped up and followed the line when it receded, but he learned, and never forgot, to stay on his side of it.

*They know how to plow and hoe, and cook and sew—and are studying school books too*

On his side of it in St. Joseph he found little to make life worth living. As a city, it offered him the gutter, the back rooms of saloons, the river and the jail. Each of these took its toll of his colored acquaintances, some of them boys of intelligence who desired decency and righteousness.

If one is white and has educational riches heaped upon him, he is touched to find that Jones was moved profoundly by the mere fact that in Iowa a high school, a university, and a Y. M. C. A. were open to him. Naïvely he has recorded how the kindness of Iowans stirred him to a sense of *noblesse oblige* — a phrase of which he didn't know the meaning until his botany professor explained it in class, but which from that day he gratefully made his own.

As we sow we shall surely reap. For the trouble of a journey to the Piney Woods School at Braxton, you can see Mississippi reaping now the tangible, marketable fruit of the seeds that Iowa sowed in this Negro boy.

And perhaps this is the place to say that this paper is not a plea for social contact between the races. Missouri cannot provide education and amusement for her white and black citizens in the same institutions. Iowa couldn't if she had many blacks. The root of the matter is miscegenation. It is come. It is upon us. But it must never be sanctioned. If there is any white person in the United States who doesn't know that, let him observe the plight of certain of the countries of South America.

The fault, of course, is ours. In nearly all these unions of white and black, the fathers were white. Let us acknowledge that we have sinned, and be prepared, on that account, to suffer as long as may be necessary, and to be as kind as we can. But let the American Negroes in their turn — whether they feel that we are right or whether they don't (and who can withhold his sympathy from those who don't?) — unite with us on that *sine qua non*: opposition, overt, honest and effective, to a mixture of the races. Unless they do, they will wage their fight for the amelioration of their cruelly hard position without the assistance of the best white elements.

Perhaps these are commonplaces, but it is getting to be customary in American magazine articles to ignore the gist of the matter that they undoubtedly contain.

What Missouri and the other Southern States *can* do — what they must do — is to provide for their Negro citizens the kind of educational and recreational facilities that Laurence Jones found open to him in Iowa. They must do this for the sake of their white people as well as for the sake of their Negroes. It is a truism that the fortunes of both are bound up together.

And — over and above all this — *noblesse oblige*, Missouri.

A flaring lightwood knot sending up licking streaks of deep red flame and twisted wisps of black smoke and dripping meteoric burning drops of "rosun", lit a party of four Negroes through the woods

They were Jones — a bachelor of arts now and teaching in a little school at Utica, Mississippi, not far away — one of his students with whom he had come to spend the holidays, and the boy's father and mother.

Through the woods other torches bobbed like witch-fire, touching the tall, mastlike boles of the pines, setting agleam an occasional cluster of mistletoe berries in the crotch of an oak, silencing the whip-poor-wills, sending the screech owls shivering off through the thick dark, and awakening the deep-mouthed baying of all the "houn' dawgs" of the countryside, who thought probably that there was going to be a 'possum hunt.

*What he did when he first entered, when sent out to work*

The torches converged upon a cabin, set at the edge of a clearing among sumach and persimmon and dogwood and sassafras trees, and every now and then the strapping bearer of one of them would lift his voice away up into that eerie falsetto which is the peculiar property of his race and send a weird halloo undulating through the night.

The windows of the cabin were without glass, and their solid wooden shutters were closed to keep out the cold, but the door stood open, and as Jones and his party approached they could see, against the leaping flames of a pine knot fire in the fireplace, men and women dancing, could hear the twanging of an old guitar and heavy shoes beating out the rhythm, and could smell tobacco smoke and whisky.

When they went inside they found the room filled with the dancers, the old men and women sitting around the fire, children crowded into the corners or clinging to the skirts of their dancing mothers, and sleeping babies — little bundles with black or brown nuclei — dropped carelessly about on chairs or tables or under them. All — children and grown-ups alike — all except the babies — smoking, chewing, dipping snuff, and drinking whisky. Now and then one of the younger men eased himself off into the bushes and satisfied his honin' for a little real noise by emptying his revolver into the quiet face of the night.

Sometimes an old man or woman by the fire would start one of the old spirituals. The solitary voice would plead strangely with the guitar, insinuating into the gala din a core of melancholy; other old voices would come to its support, broadening the air into harmony as each fell infallibly into its part; and the guitar would be put out for the moment by a rush of song, as the single smoky lamp was sometimes blown out by the wind. But mostly the guitar had its way. For singing and praying were for the day and frolicking for the night.

It was in the Piney Woods of Mississippi, and the Negroes of the Black Belt were "taking Christmas." The program was to continue there for a week, and then the crowd would move on to the next cabin. The "graduated 'fesser" had come at a bad time to interest them in his idea of starting a school.

But he began that night on a few of the most likely ones, off in a corner, talking with all the enthusiasm of twenty-four, against a background of gloomy references to the boll weevil and twenty years of futile sporadic efforts towards building a high school.

"We 'uz too busy frolickin' ter pay much min' ter what he said," one of them explained afterwards.

But when the school at Utica closed for the summer and he came back in May, he found that the obstacles were not merely seasonal.

"These hyeh niggers don't need no education," said the owner of a plantation where he talked school too well. "All they need is a little money at Christmas time and a bar'l of whisky once in a while. So I reckon you'd better make tracks. 'T ain't no good round hyeh for a stray nigger's hide. If I ketch you on this hyeh place again I'll put a little lead in you."

He didn't meet many white people of that stripe, but a little of that kind of virus will go a long way where a stray nigger is concerned. He stepped — and he still steps — carefully.

And, "Us colored

*Contrast this group of boys, taken when they entered the school, with the cadets on the next page*

folks," his own people will tell you, "we'd been er projekin' wid one kin' er thing an' ernuther ever sence de war — cotton gins an' schools an' I dunno what-all — but we mos' allus fall out an' bus' up, so hit didn't seem much use er tryin' ergin when de 'fesser come."

And when they discovered his financial condition, some of them were frankly suspicious of his motives.

"Dat light colored nigger ain't in hyeh fer no good! He ain't got nary er dollar fer dis hyeh school projec' er his'n. He jes' wan's er dime, an' den he'll be gone."

And others felt just generally uneasy about him — wished he'd "g'awn 'erway f'um hyeh. He's got too much sense. He'd never come way down hyeh fer no good ter *us*."

*Mobilized for action*

And really, why did he go away down there into the Piney Woods, near the village of Braxton, twenty-four miles south of Jackson, to be a nigger in the Black Belt of Mississippi? And that at a time when the governor of that state was declaring in a whirlwind of campaign speeches from Vinegar Bend to Yellow Rabbit that niggers had no souls — he who had been *Mr.* Jones in Iowa where he was accorded courteous treatment? There is a phrase that is often on the lips of the instructors and students in the school he has built; we heard it many times during the week that we spent wandering about their campus and talking to them: To help the race.

They got it from Jones. His work, as we examined it in detail, appeared to have been shaped on it. And when he came — turning his back on several excellent openings, including an instructorship at Tuskegee — a rather forlorn chance to materialize the idea in that phrase was certainly the only thing the Piney Woods offered him.

*The first graduating class on a picnic*

Yes, on the whole, *that* seems to have been what brought him south and kept him there: To help the race.

And, on the whole, the race helped him do it. He stayed right on, penniless and without influence, his only assets a beguiling tongue, enthusiasm and youth, and the people whom he had made his own shared their property with him and welcomed him.

He traveled all over Rankin County and a part of Simpson, riding a mule when anybody would lend him one and getting an occasional lift in an ox wagon, but more often going afoot, walking sometimes his eighteen and twenty miles a day. Sometimes he got into sections where all the people were white and it wasn't safe for a strange Negro to request food or even ask questions — especially if his tongue had a Yankee twist to it — and then he'd have to keep moving, drinking out of the branches and eating blackberries and pawpaws until he found a settlement marked with that unmistakable racial *cachet* that told him his hungry "Hello!" would elicit the familiar "Who dat?" Then he would be sure of a supper and a welcome!

And all summer he had in his pocket the same dollar and sixty-five cents he had brought with him when he came. For, being a graduated 'fessor and the only one they had ever seen, they always asked him to speak at their meetings on Sundays and took up a collection for him — eighty or ninety cents, as a rule, though fifteen or twenty was by no means rare. This paid the few expenses that he had and carried him through from May to October.

And what was he crying in the wilderness, this self-appointed mendicant apostle of education, during his seven months of wandering? Always and everywhere, for a school — an industrial high school, to be built by Piney Woods people, for Piney Woods boys and girls and men and women; to be to them as a beacon set on a hill, to lead them upward and onward to knowledge, that is, to power — prosperity — happiness.

And everywhere he went he talked too diversified farming, and the folly of raising ten-cent cotton and buying in the North with the proceeds fifteen-cent bacon and ninety-cent corn; the advantage of selecting seed corn in the field, instead of picking it out of the crib's leavings in the spring; better poultry and stock; cleaner and better homes.

You should go down there to the Piney Woods Country Life School, borrow their rickety little buggy and the mule that pulls it, and drive about among the clientele, as we did, if you would understand the courage it took to talk school to people like that, and what it meant to Jones and how it determined him to stay

*A Piney Woods school reminder*

when he found that a district Sunday school there had been organized for more than twenty-five years in the avowed and forlorn hope of building a high school. By which they meant a school that would carry their boys and girls through what are elsewhere the seventh and eighth grades. No one had ever encouraged them; none of them knew just what to do; the mites that they could get together rarely ever amounted to a dozen dollars; and yet in simple sincerity they had met regularly every year for a quarter of a century to gaze upward longingly together at their star of hope — had done this here, in our United States.

You see, sixty years ago they were all slaves. Or do you see? It is hard to see — now — and from their point of view. To try to see is a healthy bit of exercise for our so-called Anglo-Saxon imaginations! to try to understand just where *we'd* have traveled in sixty years from that kind of a start. And then try again to see — just a little way further back in *our* ancestry — the Congo, voodooism, polygamy, and head-hunting!

But we aren't like that! Certainly *not: We are the people.* But even so, *if* we are the people — and one has an uneasy feeling that maybe the high gods who can see away off before and after us smile a little when we keep saying it so loudly — *if* we are the people, surely it is something to be rather humbly thankful for — for, not pride, but righteousness exalteth a nation.

And, granted that we are not like that: *the Negroes are.* Entirely apart from whatever abilities they may or may not possess, fancy their handicap in *knowing* they're like that, the burden of the inferiority complex that we have loaded upon them! It will help to make plain the difficulties of Jones's job.

The Negroes of that part of the Piney Woods have the country pretty much to themselves, outnumbering the whites in some places five to one; which means that they don't get much help from that race whence still most of their scanty blessings must flow. Nobody can set a limit to their native intelligence until it has been given a fair test by education worthy of the name, but they are appallingly devoid of knowledge. (Though quaint wisdom lingers in astounding lodes here and there.) They are primitive, improvident, as helpless as children, and miserably poor. As a class, Jones found them plodding on aimlessly towards no goal but the day's food and the night's bed.

Many of their log cabins were built before the war. They fill them to bursting — nine to a room sometimes: rickety old structures, almost as comfortless as igloos, with glassless windows and solid wooden shutters; no carpets, no curtains, no paper on the walls; a few old chairs with rawhide bottoms, an old bed, pallets for the children, a rough pine table, a fireplace, and a pine knot glow for light; lizards beneath the doorstep, chickens under the house; a few razorback "hawgs" a mule maybe, and — for the unusually affluent — "er li'l pasel er sheep" in a bit of scraggy meadow. And mocking birds to sing all day and whip-poor-wills to sing all night among the fragrant blossoms of the chinaberry trees at the clearing's edge. And, like as not, all about, other clearings, long since abandoned, pine-thicketed testimonials to the futility of human endeavor.

Church services are held but once a month. The widely scattered schools — there wasn't one within six miles of the site of the present Piney Woods institution when it was built — go only to the third or fourth grades and are open only three or four months in the year. Most of the school houses, vile with soot and dirt, are without window panes or blackboards or even a coat of whitewash, and house seventy-five or eighty pupils, who are taught by Negro boys or girls who receive twelve dollars a month.

Is it surprising that Jones was cheered by a glimpse of the spirit that brought those people together in a convention every year in the hope of building a high school; a little reassuring evidence, however small, against Mr. Vardaman's thesis that the nigger has no soul? And yet this convention would have none of Jones; nor yet the " 'Sociation," when it met in August — the great Spring Hill Association of Churches, to which every Negro church for fifty miles sent its two delegates and its four dollars.

"Dat's jes' what dey do at de 'Sociation," his friends told him, "tek up money fer edgercashun'l puhposes. Yer sholy oughter go."

And there he went.

IN the church and filling the doors and windows were the old people. Around them the younger ones made a moving circle, every girl in a new calico dress, every boy in a new suit. Many a courtship got its start as the couples walked about, or bought hot fish, oranges, apples, soda pop, or ginger snaps from the vendors whose tables and stands made a third circle around them, or sat in the buggies and wagons that bounded all. On the fringes the inevitable camp followers plied their business — horse traders and the purveyors of home made "white lightnin' " — about as many of them white as colored.

Jones stayed for the full three days, but he wasn't allowed to appear before the 'Sociation, or to take part in any of its proceedings. He learned afterwards that the leaders, who had been in control for many years, thought he was a preacher in disguise, come to "grab de Moderator's chair in de excitement."

He tried other conventions — two or three of them — had the same kind of luck, and kept on tramping and talking. And so October found him, threadbare and almost shoeless, back at Braxton, whence he had

started, at the end of a poor country's poorest season. Rain, rain, rain, the Negroes in debt to the white people for the money advanced as usual for their summer's food and clothes, and no cotton in sight to pay with.

But people were interested, here, there and yonder — white and black — and he determined that somehow or other he was going to get started. His friends wanted him to wait a year, for more associations and conventions, but he felt that to get started would be to break a spell. Getting started had been the bugbear in that place ever since the war.

There was nothing to start with, but he remembered hearing one of his teachers say that Mark Hopkins on one end of a log and a student on the other would constitute a university. He knew the log. He had often sat there to rest and read and plan his forlorn campaign. It was a pine log, under a cedar tree, near a spring, on "er ol' th'owed away fahm" well known to everyone as the Mordecai Harris place.

He set out to notify the surrounding farmers that his school would open there on Monday morning; and those who had laughed at him for sitting around the old place laughed louder, and a lot of new ones joined them. A high school under a tree! The graduated 'Fessor must have walked himself crazy.

But Monday morning there were three boys there, and a few of the good old brethren; Principal Laurence C. Jones led them in singing "Praise God from whom all blessings flow," read two lessons from the Bible, offered up a prayer, and the Piney Woods Country Life School got started.

DAY by day the student body increased, by ones and twos and threes, until there were twenty-nine. As they came they rolled up new pine logs to sit on. After a few weeks Jones was joined by two young people he had taught before coming to the Piney Woods, and the institution had a faculty. The Negroes round about were with him now, but "we all is er po' peepul," one of them explained to the writers — a grave old man with dim eyes in a gaunt, seamed face, and palsied hands folded over the handle of a hickory stick. "We kin pray, but we ain't had nothin' in de way er money sence de war, an' de boll weevil 'ud done cut us off f'um cotton. But God mus' er sent 'Fesser Jones down hyeh ter be a leader in front er we all, an' we shoved him on wid our prayers — we sholy went down de knee-way fer him."

And that helped, but it didn't protect them from the wind and the rain, and it didn't keep them warm. Nobody could see any encouraging thing of a material nature ahead of them as winter came on. Each member of the faculty had his bonfire, and they piled them higher and rolled their logs closer in as the November air nipped more and more shrewdly.

Near by, half hidden in the weeds, was a ruined cabin, inhabited by lizards, snakes and owls and a drove of sheep. Jones made inquiries and found that it, as well as his open air school room, belonged to an old ex-slave named Taylor — the only Negro in the community who had anything "in de way er money," but too mean and stingy, they told him, to help.

Nevertheless, Taylor offered the only hope, and Jones went to see him, to ask for the use of the cabin. He found in the old man a strong tang of the Bible, a reverence for education and thrift, and a vivid recollection of certain years spent by himself in Illinois and Iowa, just after the war, going to school, barbering, and saving that bit of money which was destined to set him apart as a grandee among his own people when he

Map of Mississippi
Showing Location of School

finally returned to his native state. He took several papers and talked intelligently about "Senator Cum*mings*" and "President Tariff." He talked until three o'clock in the morning; and he gave to "the trustees of the Piney Woods Industrial School" forty acres of land and fifty dollars, bringing that institution down out of the void to solid earth. It may be that Mr. Vardaman would analyze him in vain in his search for a soul; but *some* sort of a spark disturbed his clod!

When the great gift was announced at the once-a-month service at the church the next Sunday, it caused a commotion, but one of the deacons let the fizz out of it by springing to his feet and shouting: "I ain't gwine hev nothin' ter do wid it! Thar's some trick about it! Taylor never would er done it ef it warn't er trick!"

But when Jones exhibited the money for Taylor's check, and he and his students and teachers "red up" the old cabin and moved in out of the weather, "de mos' headleadingest" members of the community were convinced and began to work for the school, and the others fell into line behind them.

And then, according to custom, they wanted to have "er big meetin' an' er jubilation" immediately. But Jones wasn't ready.

"An' er good thing too," one of them said, in talking about it afterwards. " 'Caise meetin's allus tear things up. We been hevin' meetin's round hyeh on school projec's long as I kin 'member, an' we ain't got nowhar yit. I reckin de Lawd sort er tol' 'Fessor not ter hev dat meetin'."

Instead he started out to get some solid bricks to join together with the mortar of that enthusiasm. He rode through the settlement to see what each would do.

Some pledged contributions of money, tapering down from fifteen dollars — much the largest individual amount — to a few pennies; some said they would help in hauling the lumber; some would do carpenter work; some would "rive out de boa'ds" (an offer that Jones found rather cryptic), and some could promise only their prayers. But a white lumber dealer in Braxton and the cashier of the Braxton bank — also white, of course — had promised substantial donations of lumber and cash as soon as the school had made an actual start, and with these up his sleeve Jones called the meeting.

From the accounts of eye witnesses, it seems to have been "de gloriest thing fer colored folks ever wuz down hyeh." Eleven hundred of the best of both races came from all around, in ox carts, in swaying old high buggies, in lumbering farm wagons, in sulkies and carts and surreys, on muleback and horseback and afoot. The big gifts were announced and the little ones, and drew others unto themselves. Altogether there was enough to start a building, and a day was appointed for the work to begin. The countryside went home feeling that their Piney Woods school was "set up" at last!

The next day an old woman brought two geese five miles across the country and said, " 'Fesser, dis is all dat I has ter give, but I wan's ter see dis school go up, as I has some chillun I wan's edicated."

That was ten years ago. They've been giving ever since, white and black, North and South — dollars and pennies, lumber and old clothes, labor and prayers — and very slowly these things have built up a substantial school. Everything is as plain and as simple as is humanly possible, constructed, all of it, by volunteer and student labor: a school of the people, by the people and for the people. If you are black and broke and want an education, you can get it there without money.

When we went in May to attend what was to us a unique commencement, it had an enrollment of three hundred, fifteen hundred acres of land — such as it is — eight large and several smaller frame buildings, and, altogether, total assets valued at forty-five thousand dollars — which are the property, not of Jones, but of the school.

An event in the story of the school second in importance only to Taylor's gift of the forty acres and the fifty dollars, was the marriage of the son of Honest John Jones to the granddaughter of Charlotte Temple, whose story forms a little foot-note to history.

Charlotte Temple was a slave in Kentucky. In 1853 her mistress, growing old and having no relatives with whom at her death she could trust the fate of this other old woman who was her friend as well as her property, sold her plantation and went north, so that on the free soil of Iowa Charlotte Temple and her eighteen children and grandchildren might be safely out of slavery.

But there were left behind the husbands of two of Charlotte Temple's daughters — slaves of other owners. And the simple, ignorant old black woman, newly come into a strange land, with the long habit of acquiescence and discipline heavy upon her, but indomitable and determined, set out almost at once to buy their freedom and bring them to their wives.

She managed somehow to get the money for traveling expenses and went direct to Boston, where she spoke in Faneuil Hall and met many of the early abolitionists, who encouraged and helped her. She lectured all over New England and in New York, and came triumphantly back to Iowa with the twenty-five hundred dollars that she needed to buy her daughters' happiness.

And down there in the Piney Woods to-day her soul goes marching on.

There are three obvious ways of solving the Negro problem: deportation, segregation, and education. The first is impossible; the second may some day be forced upon us by the flow of events, but concerns us immediately only in its more academic aspects; the third is approximate, and slow, and multitudinously disappointing, but at hand and working, after a fashion, and is probably the way we shall take.

Jones and his school are doing their part. They are teaching the Piney Woods Negroes to read, write and figure, farm, do blacksmith work, sew, cook, mix concrete, raise chickens, weave rugs, mend shoes. And they are teaching them to respect the white people, to work with them and for them, to bear and forbear, to disarm rudeness by courtesy and hostility by willingness to serve. And the white people in that section are grateful and friendly and cooperative.

There is a vast job ahead of the Joneses of this nation — so vast that it is fortunate, for the sake of their courage, that each of them sees only his little corner of it. But we white people have our job too. There are many thousands of us still who need to be taught to respect the Negroes, to work with them and for them, to bear and forbear, to disarm rudeness by courtesy and hostility by willingness to serve.

There are notable exceptions, of course, but the Negroes as a race are startlingly easy to disarm by these methods. One does not hesitate to say that a tentative trying out of them in certain quarters would bring an overwhelming tide of gratitude so sincere and so touching that those who created it could not return, if they would, to their old unthinking habits of contemptuousness, condescension and incivility.

These things cut deep. We talked about them with the principal of a Negro high school whom we met at the Piney Woods commencement.

"It *hurts* me," he said, "when a young white man rides up to the sidewalk where I am standing and throws his reins to me and says, 'Here, nigger, hold my horse!' "

He was a man of a good deal of dignity and poise, a firm friend of the whites, and an almost passionate advocate of moderation.

"And I don't like to be called *boy,*" he went on, in a soft, grave, troubled voice, the cadences of which have remained persistently in our ears. "I'm not a boy. I'm a middle-aged man, the father of a family, and a property holder. Of course, I don't expect *'Mr.';* but I have a name, and I should like to be called by it."

And in the name of civility, why *not* "Mr." to a man like that, the principal of a high school? Is it quite fair, quite decent, to yield to a convention, a tradition, that demand that the Mississippi whites of every rank and grade call the principal of the Piney Woods School "Jones" and his wife "Grace," and both of them "niggers"?

"Jones is a good nigger and a splendid speaker," a young, kindly, keen-minded clergyman said to us. "He's done a world of good around here. I respect him, and I'd do anything I could to help him. But if I called him 'Mr.' I wouldn't have any congregation next Sunday, that's all." (*Continued on page* 99)

*He tied her ankles and wrists, the thongs cutting into the tender flesh*

# The Keys of the City

## By Caleb Wrath

Illustrated by J. Henry

"AND in conclusion," — Mayor Hurley paused impressively — "In conclusion, fellow citizens and members of the Chamber of Commerce, it is my privilege to present to you the keys of the city — in duplicate!"

I

It was a little after midnight one morning about a year before when Simon P. Worthington picked up the receiver of the telephone in his house and excitedly called a number.

"Hello! Police Department? . . . Say, my house has just been robbed! . . .What? . . . Worthington, 341 Maple Avenue. Look here: I got home a few minutes ago and found my wife tied up and gagged in bed. . . . No — only scared. . . . I don't know yet what all he took. . . . Yes — masked; but she gives a pretty fair description of him. . . . Good enough. I'll wait up for him."

It was "Big" Bill Hurley, at that time Acme City's chief of police, who arrived a quarter of an hour later to make the investigation.

Worthington immediately conducted him upstairs to where his wife, a pretty, blonde young woman, with cheeks flushed from excitement, was sitting up in bed, dressed in a pale blue kimono. She kept nervously plaiting and unplaiting the end of her heavy braid of hair as she answered Hurley's questions.

"It was about a quarter to eleven when I went to bed. Mr. Worthington had gone off to a meeting of the Merchants' Association and I was too tired to stay up for him. I didn't even realize I had been asleep until

There was a rush of applause. In response to a nod of invitation from the mayor an alert, red-haired young man stepped forward. Like a soldier being decorated he stood there, his blue-green eyes expressionless and his lean face inscrutable as he listened to the reading of the parchment scroll. It was only when the mayor held up a silver ring on which two gold keys glittered that little, lively crinkles of amusement began to gather around the young manufacturer's eyes.

Over "Big" Bill Hurley's face had spread one of those expansive smiles for which he was so famous. " . . . and as a token of this honor," he concluded, "I

I woke up and heard someone moving in the room. At first I thought my husband had come back and was getting undressed in the dark so as not to disturb me. So I said: 'It's all right — I'm awake.' And right after that I remember saying: 'Why, what on earth, Si — have you been eating garlic?'

"Immediately a light was flashed in my face. A man seized me and began tying my hands and feet. When I tried to scream he tore off the pillow slip and gagged me with it —— "

Her hands shot up in a gesture and, as the kimono sleeves slipped back, Bill Hurley noted the cruel, red welts that stood out on her blue-veined wrists.

"The brute!" he muttered. "Did you get a look at him?"

"Yes!" Mrs. Worthington's eyes were wide and she had shrunk back instinctively into the pillows. "After he had gagged me he turned on the light. He was wearing one of those half-length black masks: you know — the kind children buy for Hallowe'en. He had hollow, putty-colored cheeks. One of his upper front teeth was missing. I remember that especially because his mouth was always a little open and there was just one front tooth that kept sticking out under his moth-eaten gray moustache; it made him look like some kind of horrid animal — a rat or something."

"O-ho!" Hurley was making rapid notes on the back of an envelope. "Go on, please."

"Well, as soon as he had searched the bureau over there, he switched off the light and went out. I could hear him moving around downstairs, opening drawers and cupboards. After that it seemed ages before I heard my husband's step on the front porch. The front door opened and closed and I heard him putting away his hat and coat in the hall closet. Then he came upstairs. He didn't even turn on the light until I made a noise in my throat to let him know I wasn't just asleep."

"Believe me, chief," interrupted Worthington, "I was more scared than she was when I turned on the light and saw her!"

"Do you know yet what was stolen?"

Worthington dictated a list and description of the few pieces of jewelry missing. When he had finished writing Hurley tapped reflectively upon the arm of the chair with his pencil.

"Worthington," he announced impressively, "I don't mind telling you that this crook is the slickest criminal the police department of Acme City has ever had to deal with. You're not his first victim and, unless we can lay hands on him pretty soon, you're not likely to be his last!"

Mrs. Worthington's eyes grew large. "Why, have there been other burglaries?" she asked. "I don't remember reading about —— "

"Big" Bill Hurley's fist crashed down into the palm of his other hand.

"This crook's been at it for six months!" he exclaimed. "Not just off and on, but almost every night. We've managed to keep it out of the papers so far for fear of its starting a general crime wave like they've had in other cities —— "

"But how do you know it's only one man?" demanded Worthington. "Have other people who've been robbed given you a description of the burglar that agreed with my wife's?"

The corners of Bill Hurley's mouth shot down.

"That's the darndest of it," he replied. "Most everybody else has been too scared to have any idea what he looked like." He smiled at Mrs. Worthington. "I certainly congratulate you on the way you kept your head. Why, I can fairly see that skinny, rat-faced crook that you describe! And the fact that you smelled garlic when you woke up — that's important. It's very likely our man is one of these South-European Bolsheviks!"

The chief suddenly dropped his voice and leaned forward with one broad palm on each knee.

"Tell you why I know it's just one man, Mrs. Worthington," he confided masterfully. "This crook never touches anything more bulky than jewels or money or securities. He seems to specialize in little objects of great value. But the main thing that stamps these burglaries as the work of one man and the thing that I can't figure out is the way he gets in. He never breaks in: he just seems able to open any lock he wants! — Have you examined your doors and windows yet?"

"Yes," replied Worthington curiously. "All the windows and shutters on the first floor were locked. The windows on this floor are out of reach."

Bill Hurley allowed his left eyelid to droop sagely. "That leaves the front door," he remarked. "We'll have a look around in a minute; but I'll bet you right now that's the way he got in!"

"The door was locked when I got home," objected Worthington, "and the lock didn't seem to have been tampered with."

"That's just it!" Hurley tapped emphatically upon the arm of his chair with one blunt forefinger. "This fellow doesn't do any tampering: he walks right into a house as if he lived there. Yes, sir, it looks to me as if he'd found some method of picking any lock that a man can put on his front door!"

"Hope it's not so bad as that," remarked Worthington. He smiled whimsically. "That would be rather a joke on me."

"How so?"

"Why, I've just perfected a burglar-proof lock. One of my hobbies — inventing things. No, no, the lock wasn't on my front door! I haven't yet found anyone to manufacture it. But, by Jove, if I ever do get that lock of mine on the market I'd hate to have this crook come along and show me that it's no good!"

Bill Hurley shrugged his shoulders sceptically.

"If you can invent a lock that this crook can't open, you're going some!" He turned confidentially to Mrs. Worthington.

"Why, for the last three months I've had Headquarters notify me immediately any burglary was reported and I've investigated each case personally. Not once has this crook forced an entrance: somehow or other he always manages to walk right in by the front door!"

"Would you like to take a look around downstairs?" asked Worthington.

"Yes." Hurley rose ponderously. He hesitated for an instant at the door as if unable to tear his gaze away from Mrs. Worthington's delicately rounded forearms and the thick, loose braid of golden hair that hung over her shoulder.

"I hope this experience hasn't been too much of a shock to you, Mrs. Worthington," he said, "and I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you again. . . . You are neighbors of mine, you know," he added a little insistently. "My mother and I have moved into one of those new houses a few blocks out Maple Avenue."

Mrs. Worthington smiled cordially.

'We'd love to have you and your mother call sometime," she invited.

## II

"Viola," remarked Worthington to his wife at breakfast the next morning, "that remark of yours about smelling garlic was a stroke of genius. That old pudding-bag, Hurley, has probably turned out the whole police force of Acme City by this time in search of an Italian desperado!"

His wife extended two bare forearms.

"It's all very well for you to laugh," she retorted. "You haven't got black and blue marks on your wrists. Besides, I think the old 'pudding-bag,' as you call him, is rather a decent sort. I would be really sorry if he lost his job as chief of police on account of his inability to cope with all these burglaries."

"You would, would you?" Worthington's good humor vanished instantly. "Oh, lord: what a woman! You marry a crook and then get sentimental about the first chief of police you meet!"

"I'm not getting sentimental about him, silly. And you're not" — she hesitated — "at least you're not — not just an ordinary crook."

"What am I then?" Worthington's eyes again began to twinkle.

"Si!" She rose from her chair and rumpled his red hair in affectionate protest. "You know as well as I do that you're ten times as much interested in that lock you invented as you are in burgling. Who ever heard of a common crook who was interested in making a burglar-proof lock?" Suddenly she turned away and began to stare out of the window. "Oh, dear!" she sighed. "I wish you'd give up burglary entirely, though. You might as well so far as getting rich is concerned; for I'm sure I don't know what you do with all your loot. Besides, I'm sick of it all. I don't think I can stand it much longer. You know you did promise me ——"

Worthington rose. He was smiling faintly.

"Come on; let's go to work," he said briefly. "There's no use going all over that argument again. I told you that I would give up crime when I had patented my lock and was in a position to manufacture it. You forget that I have the crook's love of excitement in my blood and that even you can't change me into an honest merchant overnight."

At the corner of Grove and Market Streets, in the business section of the town, the Worthingtons entered a small shop whose plate glass windows bore the neat inscription: "Simon P. Worthington. Locks." Inside the window were displayed a number of standard locks, some pneumatic door closing devices and a vacuum cleaner. In the lower left and right hand corners of the window appeared respectively, in smaller characters, these notices: "Exclusive Agent for Dust-O Vacuum Cleaners"; and "Our Specialty; Keys Duplicated While You Wait."

In the course of the morning a young man entered briskly and approached a desk in the rear of the store over which there hung a large art calendar depicting Saint Peter opening the gates of Heaven.

"Good morning, Mr. Worthington," he said. "I've called to get you to renew your advertising contract with the Acme City *Clarion*. You've been getting pretty good results, haven't you? I notice that you're using the same advertisement in the street cars."

Worthington looked up amiably as he took the proffered blank.

"Key duplicating, you mean? Well, yes. I find that a pretty profitable side line."

"How about taking a little more space this month and playing up your lock business?"

Worthington considered. "No," he answered, "I don't think that would pay me. I get some retail lock business, of course; but most of it comes from the building contractors and I've made connections with them already. No, I think you'd better just insert the same ad. I've been running:

KEYS DUPLICATED
WHILE YOU WAIT.
*Simon P. Worthington,*
Market & Grove Streets."

"All right, Mr. Worthington. Good day."

A portly, blue-jowled gentleman in a fur-lined overcoat had come puffing into the store. He smiled ingratiatingly as he approached the counter behind which Mrs. Worthington stood and, with some difficulty, extracted a latch key from his tight-drawn waistcoat.

"Good morning, miss." His plump, diamond-studded fingers contrived to brush hers as he tendered her the key. "Can you make me another key like this?"

"Of course. We can make you any kind of key you want."

"*Is* that so?" Under the stimulus of her smile the man had straightened up and thrown out his chest like a self-satisfied old rooster just about to crow. "Well, now, I don't mind telling you, bright eyes, that there's one key I certainly would like to have." Ogling her, he broke into a fat chuckle. "That's the key to your heart!"

"There are no duplicates to that."

"Then how about the original — eh, little girl?"

"Maybe your wife would object."

"Wife? . . . Oh, say, don't tell me I looked married! Why, I'm the gayest little bachelor in Acme City!"

"If you're a bachelor," she taunted, "why are you getting extra latch keys made?"

"Say, you're pretty smart! But it's this way, cuteness: you see I've got a valet or *valet* or whatever the Frog pronunciation for him is, and ——"

Mrs. Worthington had taken up a paper tag and attached it to the key with a piece of string.

"Name, please," she said in a businesslike tone.

"Are you trying to kid me?" asked the customer. But, noting the tag and her poised pencil, he added quickly: "Oh, sure — I get you. That's so I get back my own key instead of someone else's. Some system — what? Well, then, little one, you just write down 'Garber.' Samuel J. Garber — that's my name."

"Anything to do with Garber's Picture Palace?"

"Sure!" He beamed delightedly. "Why, kid, I own it — and the Reel Fun Art Theater, too. Say, how would you like ——"

But she had already taken the key and was moving toward the workshop in the rear of the store where Worthington was waiting. She came back; waited on another customer; returned for Mr. Garber's key and handed it to him with the original.

It was not until he had gone that she drew a second bright new key from her pocket. She attached it to the tag with which she first had ticketed Mr. Garber's key. Flapping open a telephone directory she ran her finger down one of its columns and then wrote below the name upon the tag: "632 Larchmont Street. Proprietor, Garber's Picture Palace and Reel Fun Art Theater. Says he is bachelor and lives with valet. Don't overlook his shirt-studs." Below she added the date.

Late that evening, in their living room at home, Mrs. Worthington turned over to her husband the three or four keys she had procured that day. He carefully

drew down the window blinds. Then, moving a table that was placed against the wall, he pried loose a strip of the wall board with which the interior of the room was lined. As the panel came away, row upon row of keys were disclosed, each neatly ticketed and hung upon a little hook screwed into the laths.

"Si, you're not going out tonight, are you?" she pleaded.

"Had a vacation last night," he replied cheerfully. "Besides, I'd like to make a little trouble for that fat neighbor of ours who couldn't keep his eyes off you. I didn't exactly like the way in which he hinted for you to invite him to call.

"Not Hurley! You're not going to rob his house?"

"Don't worry. . . . But, by Jove, I could rob Hurley — it was I who supplied the locks for all those new residences out Maple Avenue! However, I'll save that for a final insult to the police department. Tonight I'll crack another crib."

His wife was silent.

"If you must burgle some one," she said at last, "I wish you'd tackle that old woman who lives on Fairview Avenue. It's six months since she got her key. About a month ago you sent me out there to demonstrate a vacuum cleaner and to get the lay of her house. She's the meanest thing I ever saw: she let me do half of her fall house-cleaning and then never bought the cleaner!"

"All right."

Worthington had opened a theatrical make-up box and, before a mirror, was covering his cheeks with white grease paint. Blue lines and shadows superimposed upon this soon gave his cheeks a hollow and cadaverous appearance. He dusted them with talc. Then, moistening his chin and upper lip with theatrical shellac, he began to stick on little tufts of curled gray hair. As a final touch he blackened out one of his upper front teeth.

"There!" He surveyed himself with satisfaction. "Now all I need is the smell of garlic."

His wife smiled feebly at the joke. "Don't take any more chances than you can help, dear," she cautioned. "I don't know what I would do if you were caught."

He pocketed his mask and, wrapping a muffler about the lower portion of his face, slipped into his overcoat. With his hat on it is doubtful if any one could have recognized him either as an Italian desperado or as Simon P. Worthington.

"Don't you worry, old girl," he answered with the familiar twinkle in his eyes. "In a little while we'll be on Easy Street. Instead of being the accomplice of a crook who was taught to steal before he wore long trousers you'll be the wife of a successful inventor." He tweaked her ear playfully. "Only don't go making me jealous of that fat cop or I'm likely to go to the bad for good!"

He patted her cheeks affectionately and was gone upon his nightly business.

## III

During the weeks that followed, Worthington's first half-serious resentment of the attraction which his wife possessed for Hurley developed into a brooding apprehensiveness.

He came home one Saturday, having spent the afternoon at work, to find Bill Hurley chatting intimately with his wife. The chief explained that he had "just dropped in to pay a neighborly call" and that he was sorry he could report no progress so far as the recovery of the stolen property was concerned. But the lull in the conversation that followed his entrance gave Worthington an uncomfortable impression that Hurley had called to discuss nothing so impersonal as loot.

Worthington determined to keep his uneasiness to himself. He cultivated the chief with determined cordiality and, a few nights later, called with his wife at Hurley's residence. There they were presented to Hurley's mother, a benign, white-haired old lady who exclaimed over her knitting that Viola was "a darling." She confided to them that her son would probably be the next mayor of Acme City.

Thereafter Hurley became a frequent visitor. He called sometimes with his mother, more often alone. It was evident that Viola's beauty and that intriguing little air of mystery which hung about her continued to pique his interest. One evening he turned ponderously in at the Worthington's gate and dropped morosely into a rocking chair upon the front porch.

"What's the matter, chief?" inquired Worthington. "Is that mysterious burglar still worrying you?"

"Worrying me?" Hurley drew out a handkerchief and mopped his brow. "Why, Worthington, that crook is worrying me into my grave! Only last night he made another big haul. Man by the name of Garber — runs some movies in the town. It's always been his habit to go around to his theatres about half-past ten in the evening to collect the night's receipts and then to keep them in his house until bank opens the next day. Last Saturday was a big night for him. Sunday, of course, he couldn't deposit his money. Monday — that's yesterday — was a holiday; but he had holiday matinees in each of his theaters with special feature films. The result was that last night there was more money in his house than he's had there at any other time in the past year. When he woke up this morning every nickel of it was gone! The crook had taken even a set of diamond studs that was in a shirt thrown over a chair beside his bed. By God, Worthington, I'm up against it!"

"Too bad," sympathized his host. "I've heard some rumors of burglaries recently. People are beginning to wonder why no news of them gets into the paper."

"That's another thing." Hurley shifted his weight uncomfortably in the chair. "I had a talk with the owner of the *Clarion* this morning. He's a good friend of mine and — well, you may have heard some talk about my being a candidate in the next mayoralty campaign. The *Clarion* is going to back me. That's why its owner has been willing to keep quiet for so long about these burglaries. But things have come to such a pass that we've agreed the city will have to be given the whole story and allowed to protect itself the best it can."

"How do you think it's going to protect itself?"

"Darned if I know. But I do know that my political opponents will make capital out of my helplessness and that my chances of election will just about be ruined!"

A smile of satisfaction flickered over Worthington's lips. He rose and entered the house to return in a minute with a small, heavy object.

"I think I have something that may interest you," he announced. "Do you remember my telling you once that I was trying to market a burglar-proof lock I had invented? Well, here it is. I've just had it patented and have arranged, for the present, to have a big lock company in Chicago manufacture it for me. You see it's a combination lock."

"What! A combination lock to put on the front doors of houses?"

"Why not? It has its advantages. In the first place there are no keys to get lost. But its main advantage is that there are no keyholes through which it can be picked. Look at it! Your burglar is confronted with a smooth surface of case-hardened steel and more possible combinations than he could exhaust in a lifetime. Attached to the back of the lock are strips of steel that run clear across the interior of the door, so that he can't cut the lock out by drilling all around it. Why, Hurley, the only way he could get past that lock would be to blow the whole door off with nitroglycerin as if he were blowing a safe!"

Bill Hurley fingered the mechanism interestedly.

"Sounds pretty good. . . . So you really believe it's burglar-proof?"

Worthington drew himself up impressively.

"I'm so sure of it," he replied, "that I'm going to offer an indemnity of one thousand dollars to any citizen of Acme City who can trace the burglary of his house to the inadequacy of a Worthington Combination Lock!"

"Whew!" Bill Hurley's eyebrows shot up. "I'll tell the world that you believe it!"

"That's just what I want you to do." Worthington leaned forward. "Look here, Hurley: will you take this lock and have it tested — tested by any methods that you can devise? It would mean a lot to me to have your endorsement of it as chief of police; and, if you can't arrest this elusive burglar, it certainly won't hurt your standing as a candidate for mayor to be able to offer the city some constructive method of protecting itself against further burglaries."

Hurley hesitated.

"Of course I want to do everything I can to make Acme a city of safe homes," he conceded. "But I don't think it would look quite right for the chief of police to endorse one make of lock. . . . Tell you what I might do, though," he added suddenly. "We're remodelling the city jail, and, if you want to submit your lock in competition with others, we'll try it out. Then, if it's all you crack it up to be, we may be able to give you an order to equip the jail. That ought to serve as a sort of official O. K."

"Good enough!" Worthington exclaimed. Again, unseen by Hurley, a little smile of satisfaction flickered across his lips.

Two days later the Acme City *Clarion* carried a front page disclosure of burglaries committed during the last year.

It carried also a full-page advertisement of the Worthington Combination Lock. For a week or so thereafter the newspaper published sensational interviews with citizens whose houses had been robbed: regularly, in adjoining columns of the paper, Worthington inserted advertisements of his lock and announcements of his thousand-dollar guarantee. Under the caption, "What Lock Is On Your Door?" he gave an alphabetical list of standard locks and, opposite the name of each lock, the name and address of at least one citizen of Acme City who had relied on it in vain.

Orders began to deluge the little shop at the corner of Grove and Market Streets. Resentment of the chief of police under whose administration such crime had flourished began seriously to undermine his popularity as a candidate for mayor.

Then two things happened.

The *Clarion* announced one morning that the burglar had been frustrated. Attempting to break into a house equipped with a Worthington Combination Lock, he had left the lock gouged and battered, but intact. That day a group of Acme City's most enterprising business men called upon Worthington with a proposal that he organize a company and build a factory in Acme City for the manufacture of his lock. They were ready, they assured him, to subscribe generously to the stock of such a company. So Worthington left for Chicago to make the necessary arrangements with the company that had thus far manufactured his lock.

At some time during the night on which he left, the second thing occurred: a lightning series of three burglaries committed by a thief who left no clues to indicate how he had gained access to the houses robbed.

Worthington returned from Chicago to find the promoters of his projected company more enthusiastic than ever. He found his wife taciturn and troubled. Without a word she handed him a copy of the *Clarion* announcing the three burglaries. When he had scanned the story he looked up to find her round, blue eyes fixed reproachfully upon him.

"Si," she said, "I know there are two night trains for Chicago. Did you take the second one and, before you left, did — did you do *this?*"

"I've kept my promise," he replied shortly. "Since my lock was put on the market I have stolen nothing."

She looked at him doubtfully.

"But Hurley says these burglaries could only have been committed by the man who did the others," she insisted.

"*Hurley* says?" he queried angrily. "So you've been seeing him while I was gone!"

She flushed.

"I've seen him twice," she said defiantly. Then she added thoughtfully: "He says his chances of election will be wiped out entirely if there are any more burglaries."

"Poor little Boy Blue!" drawled Worthington and started to leave the room.

"Simon!" his wife called. "Come back!"

"Well?"

"I hate you when you're sarcastic like that!" She rapped the words out and her eyes flashed. "You've no right to speak of Hurley in that way!" But suddenly her voice broke and she began to finger his lapels. "Tell me, Si," she pleaded. "What is it? Have I made you jealous?"

"Have I any reason to be jealous?" he asked coolly.

"None!" Without flinching she withstood his scrutiny. "Oh, Si," she asked incredulously, her voice rising, "don't you — don't you *believe* me?"

"Oh, all right," he muttered and turned away.

"But, Si!" she insisted. "*Don't* you?"

"I said 'all right,' " he retorted gruffly. "Let it go at that."

## IV

The mayoralty campaign was in full swing now with election only a few weeks distant. Worthington, busy with his plans for the new lock company, often remained at his shop until late at night. A barrier of reserve had grown up between him and his wife. He knew that when he was in town all evening she usually went over to the Hurleys'. The chief, she said, was out making campaign speeches almost every night and his old mother was so nervous that she could not be left alone. Worthington, however, knew that it was Hurley who escorted his wife home after these calls; and he took to staying in town himself until long after midnight. Usually when he came home particularly late the next issue of the *Clarion* had a further series of burglaries to announce. Thus the feeling of mutual distrust grew between Worthington and his wife; while, at each new

burglary, the stock of the Worthington Combination Lock Company rose in value, and Hurley's reputation as an efficient public servant dwindled.

The climax to the Worthingtons' domestic troubles occurred two days before election. The morning paper had announced the theft of valuable jewels from a house in the very block in which Hurley resided. At dinner that evening Viola was ominously silent.

"Simon," she said at last, "we can't go on this way." There were pauses between her sentences and her voice came unevenly. "When I married you I knew you had been a thief. I suppose it was foolish of me ever to think I could reform you. But you know you did promise me . . ." Her words trailed off and she gazed forlornly across the room. "All these burglaries! I know you've had duplicate keys to all the houses that have been robbed. Yet you promised that you would give up crime as soon as you began to sell your lock!"

"I've kept that promise." He looked at her steadily. "Don't you believe me?" he asked sharply.

She started uncomfortably as he flung her own question back at her.

"I want to believe you," she replied at last. "But won't — won't you at least stay home in the evenings from now on?"

"I'm leaving for Chicago tonight on business."

She was silent for a moment.

"Will you take the early train?" she asked.

"I'm going now to pack my bag."

While he was upstairs the telephone bell rang. He heard Viola explaining that he was going out of town on business. "I'd love to," he heard her say just before she hung up the receiver.

He left the house a few minutes later without speaking to her again. But as he descended the steps he recognized Hurley's car coming down the street. He looked back from the next corner: the car had stopped before his house.

Worthington did not go to the railway station. Instead he went directly to the shop where recently he had spent so many evenings at work. He did no work now, but sat at his desk, scarcely moving, staring straight before him. As the hours passed the corners of his mouth were drawn down and the muscles of his jaw grew tense. Jealous furrows rising from between his contracted eyebrows cut into the transverse wrinkles on his forehead and distorted them into a network of hard, tight, little convolutions.

It was some time after midnight when he rose. Before a mirror he made up his face, working carefully over the blue shadows that gave his cheeks a sunken appearance, dusting the entire make-up with talc, blackening out one of his front teeth, and sticking on with deft precision the little tufts of curled, gray hair that constituted finally an unkempt, but realistically deceptive moustache and beard. As before he enveloped the lower portion of his face in a muffler and, putting on his overcoat, slipped out into the night.

The whole city was asleep. Only an occasional cat looked up inquiringly from some can of refuse as he passed, rubber-heeled and silent, through the streets. He turned into Maple Avenue. No lights were burning in his own house. A few blocks further on he came to Hurley's residence. It also was in darkness, and the windows on the second floor front were open a few inches top and bottom.

With the key that he had cherished for so many months he unlocked the front door and entered quickly. A ray of light from his electric torch fell upon a blue uniform cap hanging in the vestibule. Worthington smiled grimly. If Hurley's career as a public servant were not already ruined, it would be soon: a chief of police who could not even protect his own home against burglary would be the laughing-stock of the city!

In the hall he adjusted his mask and pushed back the muffler so as to disclose the rest of his face. Flashlight in hand, he tip-toed into the living room in the front of the house and surveyed it swiftly. Without stopping he passed through the heavy curtains that separated it from the dining room. Ignoring the silver he returned to the hall and crept stealthily upstairs to the second floor. Old Mrs. Hurley's bedroom, he knew, was in the front of the house. Adjoining it was another room which served on occasion as a guest chamber, but which Mrs. Hurley ordinarily used as a dressing room.

With practised fingers Worthington tried the knob of the door to this room. The door was unlocked. He pushed it cautiously — then stopped abruptly as one of the hinges emitted a slight creak. For a long moment he stood rigid, listening. . . . From the interior of the room came the ticking of a little clock. From Hurley's room, near the head of the stairs, he fancied he could hear a rhythmic, long-drawn snoring. . . . Lifting up on the knob so as to relieve the strain upon the hinges he pushed open the door and stepped into the room.

A startled gasp — the sound of someone moving suddenly in bed — and a woman's voice gave one short, stifled exclamation of alarm!

Worthington recoiled into the hall. But before he could reach the stairs a streak of light flashed on beneath the door of Hurley's room. As the door flung open a wedge of light shot out into the hall and caught him squarely. Framed in the doorway was the stalwart silhouette of "Big" Bill Hurley, in pajamas, a revolver in his hand.

"By God, I've got you now!"

Worthington, arms raised instinctively, staggered back against the wall. At the same moment a woman in a pale blue kimono stepped from the room he just had entered into the hall.

"Simon!" came her involuntary cry of recognition.

For an instant no one of the three moved. Then Hurley reached forward and snatched away the mask. In his astonishment he lowered the revolver. Worthington's head jerked back; his fists contracted. The revolver snapped again into position.

"Keep your hands up there!"

Worthington's chest was heaving. His lips worked convulsively as he stared at his wife and then at Hurley.

"You — you — you —— !" he stammered hoarsely.

Even when Hurley ran rapidly through his pockets to see if he were armed and then handcuffed him he kept automatically repeating that one syllable.

Throwing on a bathrobe, Hurley led him downstairs to the telephone. While he was speaking Mrs. Worthington came forward entreatingly from the foot of the stairs.

"Mr. Hurley! Don't!" she pleaded. "Oh, for God's sake, let me explain ——"

Worthington thrust himself before her and savagely confronted Hurley.

"I'll get you!" he cried. "I suspected you before; but I didn't expect to find her in your house!"

His wife gasped suddenly:

"Simon, you don't understand!"

But her incoherent pleadings went unheard. Worthington was struggling with Hurley, his threats punctuated by the clinking of the links of chain between his

handcuffs. When an automobile stopped before the house Hurley shoved his prisoner to the door and thrust him into the arms of two policemen.

"Take this man and lock him up. He's the burglar we've been after for the last year. Here's the key to the handcuffs. But don't take them off till you get him safe inside one of those new cells!"

Snatching Mrs. Worthington back, he closed the door.

## V

An hour later "Big" Bill Hurley, still in his bathrobe, sat with his chin cupped in both palms and his elbows on a table in the living room of his house. Opposite him Mrs. Worthington, her cheeks dry now, her voice still unsteady, was pleading for her husband. She had told Hurley the whole story of the burglaries.

Neither of them had heard the scarcely audible click of the front door latch nor observed, a moment later, the slight movement of the curtains that separated them from the dining room. Neither of them noticed now the round, blue muzzle of a revolver that was thrust cautiously between the curtains, levelled and then held steady.

"Oh, *won't* you try to understand?" Mrs. Worthington's humid, blue eyes would have softened any less official heart. "I *know* he would have given up crime and gone straight. But he must have kept on with these burglaries just because he was so insanely jealous of you. That's the way he is. You saw how he behaved tonight. Oh, dear! It wasn't *his* fault, was it, if you made him jealous? How was he to know there never had been anything between us? He doesn't even know yet why I am in your house tonight!"

Hurley looked away uncomfortably.

"If you'd ever given me the least encouragement," he admitted, "perhaps your husband would have had some reason to be jealous." He passed his hand across his forehead. "But I couldn't possibly let him go. As a matter of fact, I shall have to arrest you as his accom —— "

The curtains parted. Worthington stood before them.

"Hands on the table, Hurley! . . . Surprised you, eh? Guess you forgot who supplied the hardware for that old calaboose of yours!"

He turned peremptorily to his wife.

"What did you mean by what you said just now? Why *did* you come here to-night?"

"Oh, Simon!" She rose from her chair. Her sentences fairly stumbled over one another. "Mr. Hurley and his mother called this evening. They wanted to take us to hear Mr. Hurley's last campaign speech. When I explained that you were out of town Mrs. Hurley insisted on my coming here to spend the night. She said that with all these burglaries going on and 'after that terrible experience' I had before — " Suddenly her eyes brimmed with tears and she threw her arms about him. "Oh, Si," she sobbed, "I'm not in love with anyone but you!"

Fingering his moth-eaten moustache, Worthington looked slowly from her to his revolver and from his revolver to the chief. His blue-green eyes began to twinkle.

"Hurley," he drawled, "it looks as if I'd been about to do you a darned injustice!"

He slipped one arm about his wife.

"Viola was right about my wanting to queer your chances of election by these burglaries," he said. "But there's one thing neither of you knows:

"When I married I made up my mind to go straight. I'd just got out of jail and my debt to society was settled. I counted on making an honest living out of that lock I'd invented. . . . Well, you know how it is with inventions: you can't get anybody to promote them. Everybody tried to tell me that existing locks were burglar-proof. They made me so mad I almost chucked the whole business and went back to crime. But, all at once, I saw a way of getting the excitement I hankered for and at the same time of showing people how useless their locks were. Oh, I never told Viola! I knew she'd think I was plumb crazy to take such risks in order to launch a new lock. But the fact is that since I served that prison sentence I've never really committed burglary! *I've never taken a bit of loot out of the houses where I found it!*"

Hurley snorted incredulously.

"Where did it all go then?"

"I hid it. That's why I never took anything that was bulky."

" 'Hid it?' Where could you hide it?"

Worthington smiled proudly.

"Pianos were my favorite hiding places. You see, most everybody in Acme City who was worth robbing had a piano. I just reached under the keyboard, unfastened the catch that holds the lower front panel of the piano in place and then lifted it out. To either side of the pedal levers is an unoccupied space eight or ten inches deep. It was here, on the floor of the piano and in front of the wires and sounding board, that I left my loot. Even if the pianos were subsequently tuned there wasn't much chance of the loot being discovered, since only the lid and the upper front panel above the keyboard are then removed."

He paused for a moment and tossed his revolver on to the table.

"Now, Hurley, if you want to take me back to jail, you can. Oh, I'll stay there this time all right. But you won't be able to convict me of burglary, and you're going to look pretty foolish when you admit that this crime wave that kept you guessing for almost two years was nothing more than a clever advertising dodge! . . . On the other hand, you can keep your mouth shut. If you are willing to do that, I'll settle down to a respectable life in Acme City and go on manufacturing what is after all the best lock on the market. Those cops who locked me up never even recognized this beard as false. All they will know is that their prisoner has escaped. You can win your election on the strength of having arrested this mad burglar and made him confess where he hid all his loot. How about it?"

A broad grin spread over Hurley's face. For a moment his eyes rested on Mrs. Worthington.

"For your wife's sake, it's a bargain. But, from now on, Worthington, I'll expect you to behave like a man fit to possess the keys of the city."

*With a sudden shriek the bride tore off her bonnet*

# Unencumbered Bachelor

## By Eleanor Ecob Sawyer

**Illustrated by Will James**

IT was Will Randall's wedding-day. He sat alone by his cabin table, with a dejected expression no bridegroom ought to wear.

All about him was the gay bustle of preparation; his neighbors were gathering to forge for him the chains unbreakable. In the kitchen lean-to the women were already assembling the supper donations. He could hear their shrill voices and laughter. The fragrance of cakes and pies drifted in to join the tang of the greenery which decorated the living-room. Through the side door came masculine voices and the ring of hammers, as the men rushed up an addition destined for the bride's bed chamber, for which they had furnished materials as well as labor.

Fat Mrs. Poley came rocking in from the kitchen.

"Hello, Will. I want you should see the quilt my girl Minnie made for you."

"That's sure — a fine one," mumbled Will, turning away.

Mrs. Poley's glance fell on a photograph which some one had propped up and shrined in laurel on the table. She began to laugh.

"Well, I declare, if you ain't the mooniest love-sick fella I ever see, just a-settin' here gawpin' at her pitcher that-a-way!" She laid down the quilt and picked up the photograph. "She's a real pretty girl."

"She looks clean," replied the bridegroom guardedly.

Mrs. Poley laughed again and dug him in the ribs.

"Sly ole fox — ain't goin' to let on how sweet you are on her! What's her name?"

" 'Nell,' it says in the letter."

"Looks like she's a blonde, don't it to you?"

"Looks to be."

"Some luck, I'll say, for a mean ole bach like you, never said a civil word to a lady in his life, to git a sweet, pretty girl like that to marry him."

Will smiled falsely and mumbled again.

"Seems like she favors Miss Worden. Don't you reckon it's the curly hair?"

"No!" cried Will. "She don't — don't look a bit

like her!" He was almost past pretending. After Mrs. Poley had gone out he glanced at the alarm-clock on the fir-banked mantelpiece. Two-thirty!

Almost time to start for the train. He rose stiffly, took down a necktie from a nail beside the mirror, and put it on.

As at a stranger's he gazed upon the lean brown face reflected in the glass. The far-seeing blue eyes, with sun and laughter crinkles at the corners, to-day stared back at him vacantly. The slow smile was gone. The customary look of steady calm had given place to an expresion of dazed suffering.

A rollicking voice pierced to his consciousness. Buck Hawn stood in the doorway of the new addition.

"Where's the lookin'-glass?"

Buck strode to it without waiting for an answer, and shouldering Will out of the way examined his sun-bitten visage critically.

"Looks like I could a-cut that lady out o' the herd myself, if I'd just a-thought to send her my pitcher first. You better watch out some o' us handsome devils don't git her away from ye yet." A horn-palmed hand smoothed back the upstanding quills of his hair.

"I — reckon that's so." Will picked up his hat and retreated toward the front door.

"You ain't seen Ashburton around yet, have ye?" continued Buck.

"No."

"He was goin' to ride over with Worden's folks."

"Worden's! You didn't ask *her — them?*"

"Why, o' course. We ast everybody. An' Miss Margo, she promised she'd ride over early, to help the women-folks with the cookin'."

"Maybe she — they — won't come," gasped Will. He walked blindly to the door.

Outside things were not quite so bad, for the free winter sunshine streamed down upon him, and the far reaches of golden plain that spread from the mountain's foot lifted his spirit with the suggestion of escape. But under the tall firs about the cabin stood saddle-ponies, and wagons from which the horses had been unhitched; some men were tending the fire in a trench under a barbecuing steer; and the sight of the itinerant preacher, his black-coated presence a terrifying symbol of things eternal and unchangeable, dropped the young man's heart a last impossible inch.

His eyes searched hastily among the horses for Margaret Worden's white-foot pony. It was not there. Miss Margo had not come yet. He prayed that she would not come at all. It seemed as if her presence would be the final twist of the knife he could not bear.

He was overpowered by a sense of nightmare unreality. How had it all happened? Only last week he had stood on his mountainside a free man, with peace, love, and even an unacknowledged hope in his heart.

It was Ashburton, of course. Leslie Ashburton was the answer. From the moment this handsome "remittance man" from the East had taken up his claim in the mountains near Worden's ranch, the precious, intangible thread that ran between Will and Miss Worden had snapped.

Ashburton had appropriated Miss Margo as by divine right. He drove with her, played the guitar to her, he danced all sorts of strange new dances. He fought with weapons the other men did not understand.

Will was a man of the plains and the mountains. He had scarcely talked to a dozen women in all his life. He was romantic, and, worst of all, he was shy. What chance had he?

A sudden vision of Miss Margo sprang before him — Miss Margo, with her ringlety ruddy-gold hair, and the dancing eyes that always made him think of a brook running over a brown bottom. He loved her with a distressing intensity. Will began to turn his head from side to side like a man in physical agony, beating his soft hat against his leg.

"I never had a chance with her," he told himself, "but it seems just like I couldn't — couldn't marry any one else."

His mind flashed back to the idyllic days before Ashburton's appearance; to the hours when he had sat enchanted, listening to Miss Margo chaff the other men.

Of course he knew that he meant nothing to her. How could she guess that his heart hammered like a steam-drill at her approach, and his throat contracted beyond the possibility of speech? Why should she even be aware of his silent, agonized presence? She was not. His infatuation was hopeless. But that did nothing to ease the pangs of his madly thrilling heart.

There were only, of late, a few brief, never-to-be-forgotten moments when he had been with Miss Margo alone.

First in memory was the wonderful, terrible day down at the corral, when Miss Margo had tried to ride the half-broken little pinto Ashburton had given her.

Will had been the first to reach her when she fell, and he carried her into the house, her still, white face against his shoulder. He had laid her on the living-room couch and dropped to his knees beside her, calling upon her, in silent agony, to come back.

Other faces, awed and anxious, crowded about them; but he was conscious only of the moment when her brown eyes opened quietly, and without their barricade of laughter, into his. For one eternal instant it had seemed as if they two were one.

A moment later and the smile was back — a faint, brave smile this time, but shutting him out once more.

And then there was another time, only two short weeks ago, when he had asked, yes, actually asked her, to go down into his mine with him.

In Will's mine, which was as yet not much more than a prospect, there was no cage; the miners rode up and down standing on the rim of the bucket that brought up the muck.

He had helped her into a set of oilskins, and they stepped on to the edge of the bucket, steadying themselves by the cable from which it hung. Transported by his own courage, Will felt the frightful inhibition which usually laid itself upon him in her presence, lifted. His power of speech was for the moment miraculously restored.

As their heads dropped below the surface of the earth and the speed of the bucket quickened, he said to her, just as if she had been an ordinary girl: "Look out in a minute for an awful jerk. Harry started me down on gravity the other day, and when he threw in his engine it almost knocked me off the bucket."

"I'm hanging on as hard as I can already," replied Miss Margo.

"I reckon I'd better make sure," said Will, reaching one long, steel-fibered arm about her. "Your daddy wouldn't like it if I dropped you off of here."

He was close now, dangerously close, to the bright cheeks and laughing eyes; near, fatally near, the little ringlets lying against her neck — and yet, not near enough! He no longer had control over his tongue; he was light-headed, as if he had drunk a barrel of mescal.

"He might object," Miss Margo was saying. "Why don't you tell him not to do it — Harry, I mean, and the engine, stupid."

"Forgot," murmured Will, without looking at her. "Hold on, now. Here it comes!" He tightened his arm about her.

His words were followed by a sudden jerk and a slowing up of speed, which might, indeed, have sent any one unprepared to the bottom of the shaft.

"Don't worry," said Miss Margo. "I c — couldn't get away from that arm of yours with a donkey-engine."

It was her turn not to look at him.

Will relaxed his arm, but did not remove it.

"Isn't the danger over now?" she asked presently, looking up at him with the imps once more on tiptoe in her eyes.

"Not till we get clear to the bottom," he returned, shamelessly.

"Aren't we most there? It seems to be taking forever."

"It don't seem so long to me." Then he added, teasingly, with his new-found courage: "Because I'm used to it."

"Oh, you always take girls down this way?"

Will's feeble effort at repartee collapsed, but his arm remained stubbornly about her. By the time they reached the bottom of the shaft it was trembling. She looked up at him once or twice with a malicious gleam in her eyes, but said nothing; and Will was glad. He adored her teasing, but he did not want that spell broken even by her.

Across Will's mental screen flashed next a picture in the Worden's bunk-house, where he had found the boys laughing, one night, over the matrimonial column of a San Francisco newspaper. Ashburton had appeared, smuggling a bottle of "red-eye," which, as it went round, caused the laughter to grow louder.

It was Ashburton who suggested that Will answer one of the advertisements; and when at last Ashburton dared him, he grew angry and demanded a pencil. There seemed no harm. If the girl by any chance should answer the letter, he had only to write again and tell her it was a joke.

Through the pleasant mist created by the unaccustomed taste of "red-eye," the men searched eagerly through the column for an advertisement to answer.

Ashburton began reading them aloud:

"Eastern widow, means, unencumb., med. blonde, good appear., like meet widower, cult., child consid., no G. D., agents, triflers, save stamps.

"Gent neat, working, seeks refined little lady pal, 30, 140 lbs., not over 5 ft. 4½."

And so on and on through the list of yearning, economical hearts.

Buck Hawn stood out for "a young lady of genuine, natural nature, who was fond of outdoor, rural and country life." Tom Donohoe insisted on the "wealthy, congenial widow by death to go 50-50 with classy gent of good morals."

But after long argument the choice was made unanimous for the following:

Beautiful girl, weary of society's pampered pets, desires to correspond with real man. Answer, man from ranch or tall timbers.

There was another wrangle over the form of the reply. Buck Hawn finally framed it on the models presented in the paper.

I am only a little feller, and aint much on looks, but very lovin. If you mean sinceer and are what you say, send pitcher. Three other wives have died on me, and hope you won't mind been the forth. Red rouge lizards and dance-hall kyotees, nothing stirring.

Will had appended his signature to this communication and addressed it to the box number furnished by the beautiful society girl. Buck promised to mail it in town the next day; and Will and the other men, having had their laugh out, promptly forgot the incident.

It was but three days later, however, when the answer came. Out of a brown manila envelope fell a cheap photograph of a plump, pretty girl in an evening gown of coarse lace, together with a sheet of scented lavender note-paper bearing the following message:

Dear Mr. Randall:

Your small stature will make no diference to me, though I am a big girlie myself. Am very congenial. Have no objection to the three other wives, as they are but a proof of your loving heart. Will you meet your loveing bride on the train that gets into Arroyo junction next Friday afternoon, and please have minister in readiness as I am a good girl and want no afinities in mine.

With kisses, yours truly,

Nellie Belle Sanders.

Will walked out of the post-office and mounted his horse in a condition of semi-consciousness. So stunned, indeed, were his faculties, that he was all of the twelve-mile ride back to camp arranging the facts in understandable order.

She was coming. She had even looked up the trains. She would be here Friday.

Impossible! She did not mean it! He would not, could not, marry her. Arrived at home, he dropped the bridle-reins over his pony's head and tramped through the fir-trees up the slope that overlooked his camp. Just what had he said in the letter? His head hummed with panic. He could not remember clearly. But surely — yes, no doubt of it — he had made the girl an offer of marriage.

He could not bear the sight of the rising muck-bucket on which Miss Margo had stood so close to him that day. He fled back to the house. What could he do? A lawyer! Not much time! What kind of woman could she be to marry a man she had never seen? But it was not for him to sit in judgment on her motives. Had he not asked her?

In the lean-to kitchen, as he busied himself mechanically over supper, a single inexorable conclusion confronted him. She was young; she trusted him; she had said yes. A man of honor could do nothing but live up to his agreement.

He pushed back his savorless sourdoughs and coffee, got out a pad of paper and a pen, sat for a long time over them. At last he wrote:

Will meet the 4.30 train Friday.

W. T. Randall.

He sat for another long space over the paper, feeling that some slight intimation of happiness was due. He could not, however, find it in his stricken heart to add a hypocritical expression of joy, couched in terms however restrained, and sealed the note at last as it stood.

That was just last Monday; and now —

"Where's the groom?" It was Buck Hawn's roar. "Oh, I thought maybe you'd got bashful and run off and hid in the brush. Time to hit the trail." He passed on to a group beneath the trees. "Here, some o' you boys hitch up them sorrel ponies, pronto."

"Hello, Will." Another voice, a sweet, feminine one this time, spoke from the house-door beside him. Will Randall felt the blood rushing to his face. Miss Margo — Miss Margo!

"Good evening," he said, hoarsely.

He stiffened. He could not look at her. He clenched his hat in a strong, quivering hand.

She was at his side. He was conscious, even without looking, of her straight, vivid little figure.

"So you're really going to be married, Will?"

He thought he detected a slight tremor in her voice, and glanced up eagerly, but saw only the brown mis-

chief-devils dancing as always in her eyes.

"It looks that way," he muttered, staring at the ground again.

"I didn't think you'd go back on me like that?" There was laughter in her voice, too, now. "Don't you think it was kind of a mean trick, when I wasn't even around to look after my property?"

He turned his head away. He could not answer.

After a moment she went on in a different voice.

"Bridegrooms are supposed to be happy, Will. Are you?"

He looked at her again with depths of longing and misery in his eyes.

"Happy!"

"I wanted to say — " She hesitated. "I wouldn't want one of you boys to make a mistake. And it doesn't seem just right to — marry a girl — you haven't seen, and don't — like."

Oh, how he wanted her to understand!

"I've got to, Miss Margo! I wanted to tell you, but I couldn't. It — it's like this. My word's out, you see, and I've got to meet it."

"Oh." She understood. There was silence between them for a moment, in the golden sunlight of his wedding-day. Then she held out a slender brown hand.

"Well, then — good-by, Will."

He saw the hand out of the corner of his eye, but pretended not to, because he dared not touch it. He felt the red going to his face again.

"Good-by," he whispered.

"Don't forget me, will you? You know I always liked you."

He shook his head. She walked off a few steps. He looked toward her. She was digging the toe of her riding-boot into the sand. After a moment she turned and went quickly away.

There came a staccato thumping of small hoofs as Will's two vicious little sorrels, barely restrained by Buck Hawn's huge paws, whirled the buggy up to the door.

"Here they be. Git in, now, you Will. He's goin', folks!"

A hilarious mob surged up from all sides, surrounded him. Like a trapped cougar he looked about at them. Miss Margo was not visible. But there was Ashburton, come, of course, to gloat over the passing of a rival. It seemed to Will that his enemy's self-contained face masked triumph, that there was a spark in the opaque green eyes that usually looked like water running under ice. Unreality laid its hand on him again. He got into the buggy much as condemned men must have mounted the tumbril of old. It could not be; yet here he was, going through all these motions which were leading him inevitably to the guillotine.

Buck Hawn passed the reins into his hands, jumped out, then leaned toward him over the buggy wheel.

"Hi, you ole outlaw! What you doin' packin' a gun?" He reached out and plucked the six-shooter expertly from Will's hip.

Instinctively the doomed man reached after it, but Buck was bestowing it in his own spare pocket.

"This ain't a fight, it's a weddin'. Who d'ye want her to think she's marryin' — Two-gun Tony from Tombstone Gulch?"

Well, what did it matter? It was all of a piece — gunless, riding in a buggy, going to be married . . .

The crowd hurrahed and waved. The sorrels were snorting and plunging at all the noise. Will was conscious of waving, of skinning his lips back from his teeth in a grin.

"Good-by!"

"Give her a kiss for me!"

"Don't let her git loose from ye on the way back!" . . .

It lacked but a minute to half-past four when he tied up his ponies at the Arroyo Junction hitching-bar. The train was late. He could see the string of tiny red boxes crawling along the mesa to the west. A number of cowmen were hanging about the station and the general store, but Will stayed where he was, fussing interminably over his harness, while the sorrels blew and fidgeted.

His heart began to pound like a runaway as the engine shrieked, slowed down. He heard the hiss of the airbrakes. His eye leaped the length of the train, and back. Why, there was no one getting off at all. Yes — there was. The porter put down his box, swung off a big bag, assisted some one — yes, a lady.

But she was tall, gaunt, and moved determinedly. A small bonnet perched on the back of her head. The sun shone on a pair of steel-bound spectacles, and betrayed a bunch of gray curls above each ear.

Will's heart quieted with relief. It was not she. This woman was old and thin and homely; she bore no resemblance to the plump, frivolous blonde "Nell" of the photograph. Nell had not come. She had written the letter just for a joke, exactly as he had written his.

He threw up his head like a range-colt turned out of a corral; he breathed again the deep breaths of freedom. What a joke on the boys, to return brideless to his self-invited wedding-guests!

Blessed, everyday emotions flooded once more through his brain. The thought of Miss Margo brought a rapture again, instead of pain. He remembered that he needed some cartridges, and that the supply of frijoles for the boys in the mine was getting low.

Still, even as he turned toward the store, there was a little tickle of uneasiness in his chest. It was not usual for a woman to get off at this station, alone. At the store steps he turned, glimpsing the lady passenger from the tail of his eye.

She was talking to one of the cowmen, who was motioning her in the direction of Will's outfit.

Drenched with perspiration, Will conducted his purchasing. But as no voice addressed him, no hand fell on his shoulder, his temperature had almost regained normal when he stepped at last on to the porch. His eye swept the empty plaza, turned toward the hitching-bar. The lady sat in his buggy, her hands folded in her lap — waiting.

For some time he stood on the steps, his arms full of bundles, rooted and helpless. Then he squared his shoulders. How ridiculous to be afraid. It was a mistake, of course. She probably wanted a lift somewhere. He strode over to the buggy. The lady had drawn a brown chiffon veil over bonnet and face, against the desert glare. Through it came little more than the gleam of her glasses and the glimpse of gray hair.

The young man shifted his bundles to pull off his hat.

"Beg pardon, ma'am, are you — o' course you aren't Miss Sanders?"

She nodded emphatically, with a maidenly smile that suddenly tightened the coils of fear about his heart.

"Not Miss *Nellie* Sanders? You aren't — you aren't — "

She nodded again, with a simper, looking down, lifting one shoulder and twisting her hands in their brown cotton gloves.

"Was it you," articulated Will hoarsely, "that wrote the letter — the letter — "

She nodded again, the glasses fixing him with what he took to be a somewhat stern surprise.

He said no more, but putting his bundles under the buggy seat with her bulging telescope, took his place beside her and started the ponies. She was indeed a "big girlie." How she had tricked him! Sent some one else's picture! A determined widow or hideous old maid. Never mind; he could hate her no worse than he already hated the blonde girl of the photograph Or could it even now be a mistake?

"It was you sent me the picture?"

Nod.

"It was *your* picture?"

Nod, nod.

Will Randall was on the point of uttering his first sarcastic speech: "Taken back when you were a little girl, wasn't it?" But an innate sense of good sportsmanship forbade. He had brought this trouble on himself — permitted this woman to come here to marry him. He would not badger her on her wedding-day, even if she had deceived him.

The word brought a groan to his lips, but he repressed it. He would never badger her, he knew. He would move through life silent and unassertive, whatever his sufferings — and he began to opine that they might be many. He amended his question.

"Taken — some little time ago, I suppose."

Another nod, somewhat less cordial. Was she dumb? Perhaps it was as well. He felt that he would not care to hear her voice, nor listen to the things that it would say.

Occasionally she made strange guttural noises, unpleasant to hear. His mind reeled, grasping at straws. Tuberculosis! A way to attain the Arizona climate! So much the better. Thoughts of a femicidal nature flashed through his brain. But why did she not speak? Hope sprang up in his breast. Could it be a lady from town, hired by the boys to plague him, and with no intention of marrying him at all?

But no — the wedding-gifts, the addition to his house, the preacher summoned all the way from Tres Rios. Hope died. He had known his friends to go far in a joke, but never so far as this.

A mirage of Miss Margo's bright eyes and merry, heartless smile swam before him. A groan of fathomless anguish burst from his lips. Why had he not gone to her on his knees, thrown himself before her horse, or kidnapped her and held her a prisoner in his mine till she consented to marry him?

He strove valiantly with the one-sided conversation.

"I hope you'll like this country, ma'am."

She turned upon him the simper which was already beginning to rasp his nerves. Will almost jumped out of his skin when she replied suddenly, in a harsh, metallic voice:

"I do. And thank you kindly."

"It gets a little hot here sometimes, but it's real healthy."

"Looks to be. I like it."

Evening was drawing on. The desert wind blew chill. The woman reached for a red and black checked shawl beneath the seat, the glasses giving him a coquettish passing glitter, and drew it round her shoulders. He supposed he should have helped her, but his hands seemed glued to the reins. He could not touch her. Of a sudden she leaned toward him, her shoulder brushing his, and whispered in her unpleasant voice:

"I like you, too!"

A chill crawled over Will's flesh. He seized the whip and gave the sorrels an unwonted, uncontrollable cut.

As the buggy rocketed up the mountain slopes toward his camp, he struggled once more for animation and cheerfulness.

"That's my diggings up there. You can see the hoist-house and the boys' tents, and that's my" — he tried to say "our" — "house under the trees."

"It's real pretty."

"And those are the folks from all the ranches and prospects round this way. They've come to give — us — a barbecue."

"You got the preacher ready, like you promised?"

"Yes, ma'am." He ran his fresh white wedding handkerchief across his forehead.

The lady leaned forward with a suggestion of eagerness, her brown cotton hands working nervously in her voluminous gray alpaca lap.

The young man's heart was touched with the first sympathy he had felt.

"She wants a home," he thought. Well, it was hers. He would live out his bargain. He would give her everything he had except one thing — love. That he had not to give.

They drew up before the group of friends, ranged decorously now to receive them. Some one stepped forward and took the ponies' bits. He caught a glimpse of Miss Margo, standing by the Poleys' wagon.

Will alighted rigidly; he turned to help his bride. It seemed to him that a thousand solemnly curious eyes, instead of a bare threescore, were piercing him. The woman leaned heavily on his arm as she got out of the buggy.

"Boys and ladies," said Will, in a voice he had never heard before, "this is — make you acquainted with — Miss Sanders."

His friends all bobbed and nodded, and Miss Sanders nodded, too. An instant longer she stood there beside him, then reached up and put her arms around his neck!

Was she actually — ? She was, before them all! Miss Margo! He could not bear it. He snatched her arms from his neck, pushing her away from him and then —

With a sudden shriek the bride tore off bonnet, veil, wig and goggles, exposing Tom Donohoe's cropped poll and riotous face. His savage joy-whoop was echoed by thirty lusty voices. He rolled on the ground, the gray skirts flapping about his wildly waving legs.

When he was able, he sat up, and with guttural noises of mirth, which in their suppressed form had offended Will's ears on the drive, quoted snatches of the victim's conversation.

" 'Weren't it took just a li'l while back?' " He gave an imitation of Will's groans and moppings of the brow.

By this time the wedding-guests were all rolling helplessly or sitting weakly, their heads in their hands, their howls arising to the heavens. It was the biggest, most complete and thorough joke in memory.

" 'Hope you'll like our country, ma'am,' " enunciated Tom Donohoe between roaring geysers of laughter. " 'The folks around here is right nice' — Oh, mah lord!" He relapsed into a groveling heap.

Will Randall looked about him, and there was murder in his eye. But it was not toward the person of his deceiver that the death-look went, despite that gentleman's obnoxious joy. All he could see through the mist before his eyes was the well-dressed figure of

Leslie Ashburton, leaning against a fir-trunk, and with tears of laughter coursing down his cheeks.

The bridegroom's hand flew to his right hip, but the motion did not diminish his enemy's hilarity. Even this detail, thought Will, Ashburton had planned.

He did not know that his face was perfectly white; that he presented the terrible spectacle of a gentleman in anger. Like a silent thunderbolt he crossed the little grove. Like a leopard he sprang.

The cowmen rushed him, yipping. They tore him from the delicious feel of hard flesh beneath his fingers. He wrenched loose. A big fist shot out, drove through Ashburton's hastily raised guard to the point of his chin, turned the smile on his face to blankness and dropped him in a very quiet length at the foot of the tree.

The cowmen roared the louder.

"Hit him again!"

"Don't kill him!"

"We'd ought to have did up his fists. They're worse'n ary gun."

Will turned and charged them, swinging right and left, while they scrambled, ducked and hooted. He caught two or three of them, laying them out on the ground. A dozen more swept in on him, came up behind him, seized his arms and pinioned them.

They were all ki-yi-ing and yelling at once.

"Bring me a lariat!"

"Better rope him and hog-tie him 'fore he damages any one else."

Will's senses began to come back to him. He thought of Miss Margo. He scarcely dared look at her; yet he must know. If she was laughing he would die.

He brought his eyes slowly toward the Poleys' wagon. She was still there. She was not laughing. He could not read the expression on her face. If it was pity, that was worse.

But the fight had gone out of him. He wanted only to get away from them all — away from her. The men saw the change in his expression, felt his muscles relax. They dropped his arms and left him, knowing that this section of their joke was ended. They trooped off to the last tasks of the barbecue feast, their pleasure deliciously enhanced by their host's gloom, and carrying with them the cowboys he had laid out, still somewhat dazedly feeling themselves over.

A bottle of mescal began to circulate.

One of the women had thrown a bucket of water over Ashburton's head, and he sat up, his hand going to his chin.

But Ashburton had triumphed, for all his sore throat and aching head. Will knew that well enough.

Crookedly he shambled off to his cabin, into the deserted living-room. He did not feel like fighting now. His lips began to tremble, and he put his hand over them to keep them still. He would have liked to lay his head down on the rough deal table and cry like a child.

How easily he had fallen into the trap! That man, making such a fool of him before his girl! His girl! It had been the easier because he cared so much.

His pride, the merciless pride of the shy man, told him that his disgrace was irretrievable, that Miss Margo would never again look at him without a laugh.

He began to pace up and down the room, striking one fist into the other palm.

"What a damn fool! My girl! My girl! What girl could love a man she had seen made such a fool of as that?"

She would marry Leslie Ashburton, just as Ashburton had planned. In the silence of his little living-room, where in shy dreams he had dared to set Miss Margo's feet upon his hearth, her teasing face above the beans and bacon at his table, he renounced her at last, forever.

Only revenge could still be his.

"I'll kill that man some day," he said aloud.

"Oh, I wouldn't do that."

He turned, a great surge of red sweeping his face.

"I sure will."

"But — but I don't want you to," said Miss Margo.

Will threw up his arms.

"That's different. Of course you — you wouldn't want him hurt."

"Oh, him! I meant I — I wouldn't want you to kill any one."

The young man's sorely assaulted heart began turning double flip-flops within him.

"You'd care — you wouldn't want — "

"I wouldn't want to marry a man-killer."

The perspiration started out on Will's forehead.

"Miss Margo!" he groaned, "don't talk like that! Don't you see I — I can't stand much more — "

"I was only thinking," went on Miss Margo relentlessly, "it seems a pity when the barbecue's all ready, and the minister handy, to waste a perfectly good wedding like this."

She was just tormenting him, of course; her eyes looked shinier than ever.

"I know I'm not much of a match, but anyway I haven't got gray hair yet, and I don't wear brown cotton gloves — "

Well, if she could tease him she was still his friend, in spite of everything. It hurt terribly, but he stood there basking in her cruelty.

"As long as you don't care whom you marry, and one girl's just as good as another, I thought perhaps maybe — I wondered — if I wouldn't do myself?"

Suddenly she stopped and stamped her foot, the tears springing to her bright eyes.

"Oh, you terrible man!" she cried with a break in her voice, "can't you see I — mean it?"

For a moment he stared at her blankly; then her expression, all at once sweet and serious, cleared his incredulity. A cry rose to his lips. He stumbled toward her, headlong — just as the preacher's black-coated figure, symbol now of eternal and unchanging joy, passed the open doorway. The defrauded clergyman was mounted on his pony, in full withdrawal from the scene of heartless frivolity.

Laughing, Miss Margo sprang aside — fortunately, for the hug Will had in his arms for her would have crushed a grizzly.

"Miss Margo!" he cried. "Oh, Miss Margo!"

This time she let him catch her, risking destruction in his arms.

When his head at last ceased whirling, he drew Miss Margo with him through the doorway.

"Folks," he tried to tell his friends, "Miss Margo, she — we — she and I — " But he found that after all only a husky fraction of his voice had returned to him.

Buck Hawn was the first to recover from the general bewilderment.

"I'll walk seven miles barefoot if there ain't goin' to be a weddin' after all!" An expression of beatific mischief once more overspread his face. "Hi, you Ashburton," he hailed, "you're the lad we want. Go fetch a lariat and round up the preacher!"

# The Women in Room 27

*A story of the American Secret Service in France during the war*

## By Major C. E. Russell

*Author of the Secret Service stories now appearing in* McCLURE'S; *"The Murder of Private Hand", "The Fire Bugs"*

Major Russell, Provost Marshal at Bordeaux in 1918, will contribute a secret service story of absolute authenticity and of absorbing interest to McCLURE'S every month, until the following list is completed: "The Cocaine Smugglers", "The Algerian Murderers", "The Underground Railroad", "The Woman Spy of Biarritz", "The Wine Swindlers", "The Train Robbers" and "The False Alibi"

LONG before you arrive at Arcachon you are sure to wonder why you ever started. Of all the trips in France, either by train or automobile, the one from Bordeaux to Arcachon easily takes the prize for being the worst. Four years of war had raised such havoc with the rolling-stock of the French railroads that the cars in the service on the Bordeaux-Arcachon line looked as if they were of the vintage of 1800. The railroad winds in and out through almost endless forests of pine trees planted row on row by the French, until even these rows get on your nerves, and you long to see just one tree that is out of line. There are no picturesque scenes on this trip — just miles of flat, sandy, uninteresting country.

Then there are the salt marshes that must be crossed. If, by chance, you cross them when the tide is out, and it seems always to be out, you will no longer wonder why it is that both the men and women of France are such inveterate users of perfume — without a scented handkerchief negotiating the Arcachon marshes is some event.

Surely, you think, a city located in such an inaccessible place cannot be much of a city. And when the train whistles for the station you are already consulting the time table to learn when the next train leaves. Then, in the twinkling of an eye, all is changed. The train rumbles across the bridge and through the trees you see a vision of beautiful white villas. They resemble nothing so much as doll houses, each one apart in its own little park, and surrounded by luxuriant semi-tropical trees and flowering plants. The streets are lined with these attractive villas, and, unlike other cities in France, the passer-by, instead of being compelled to look at an ugly stone wall and guess what is on the other side, can peer through an ornamental iron fence and share with the owner the artistic beauties of the place — such is Arcachon.

The city is located on the inside of the hook that forms Arcachon Bay and has one of the finest bathing beaches on the entire French coast. Here one is not disturbed by the Life Guard's whistle when endeavoring to get into water deep enough to splash around in without touching bottom. If you have ever visited the watering places of France, you know well that officious personage, the Life Guard, with his whistle. Just as you are out deep enough to enjoy a real swim — "whee-ee-ee!" goes the whistle and with frantic arm wavings you are called back to mingle with the women and children in about six inches of water. Is it any wonder, then, that the fast French set flock to the one bathing beach where there is no such plague?

The city fathers had wonderful visions of making Arcachon the Monte Carlo of France. Millions of francs were spent upon the race track and the gambling casino, said by those who should know to be one of the finest examples of Moorish architecture in the country. Now, all this was changed. Where, before the war, you heard the clink of silver, the cry of the croupier, or the sigh of the ruined gambler, you now heard the moans of the wounded or the shrieks of the dying. France had ruthlessly requisitioned the casino and had turned it into a hospital.

War itself could not keep the French smart set away from this city, and even during the darkest days of 1918, if one did not know, here at Arcachon it would not seem possible that France was at death grips with her old time foe. Beautifully gowned women, escorted either by French or American officers or by civilians in white flannels paraded up and down the beach or out on the promenade pier. During the bathing hour the beach was covered with small tents sheltering those who came to swim and those who came to show off. It was an ideal spot for a war weary veteran to pass his leave; and many of our officers availed themselves of the opportunity of spending a week or two here.

About five miles directly south from this spot, in the midst of sand dunes and pine stumps, lay Camp Hunt, the most desolate of all our training camps. Inasmuch as at this camp were trained our heavy artillery units it must of necessity be off by itself. Here our soldiers were trained in the handling of the big guns. And if they were to shoot straight when they went into action they must have plenty of practice first, and eight, ten, or even twelve inch shells flying around a closely inhabited country are not conducive to health, so an open spot in the wilderness, far removed from all habitation was selected for the site.

Still another reason why this camp must be isolated was that here the new guns were tested out and here plans were made and drills held which later on, when put into actual practice on the front would mean a painful surprise for the Germans. With all these activities in this camp it was obviously necessary that the camp be closely guarded. We were well aware that Germany suspected what was going on and that

we were preparing a surprise for her. Much to our chagrin, even with all our precautions, she was learning about our work at Camp Hunt. German artillery officers captured on the front seemed to take particular delight in informing us about our artillery experiments; how many guns we had, the caliber of them, just how many batteries we had in training, and other things that it was never meant that they should know. The loquacity of these prisoners proved to us that what we had considered a closely guarded secret was a secret no longer. It was disconcerting to say the least, to be told by a prisoner that our carefully guarded plans were known to the enemy and they were profiting by that knowledge. Such was the condition of affairs in 1918, when from our headquarters in Tours came the order:

"Plug that leak and plug it quick!!"

It was very evident to us that the information was coming from the camp direct or nearby. It did not seem possible to us that Germany, clever as she undoubtedly was, could successfully plant a spy in the camp itself. Then, too, the character of their information convinced us of this improbability, for the troops were continually moving in for a few weeks' training and then moving on to the fighting areas. If a spy had succeeded in joining one of the regiments, he would long ago have gone forward with his unit. If the leak was not in the camp itself, and we were satisfied that it was not, then *where* was the logical point for Germany to concentrate her spies?

### Arcachon Was the Answer

It did not require a very strong argument to convince us that this city was a nesting place for spies. The city was a rendezvous for the American and French officers and men on leave from the front, and the only recreation spot available for the officers and men from Camp Hunt, who came in at every opportunity to escape the dreariness of the wilderness and the monotony of camp life. What better place could be found for secret work? The hotels and cafes were crowded and, in the midst of the native population and the transient French guests, a clever spy could work undetected. Our deductions satisfied us that in this city of villas and beautiful women we would find the answer to our problem. It was an assignment much sought after by our men. For once, while working to solve a problem, they could at the same time secure more or less relaxation and enjoyment out of the work. Too, it gave us an opportunity to reward the men who were most deserving: Lieutenant Johnson was assigned to cover the hotels, Sergeant Bell to take care of the *pensions*, and Graham, our best man, assigned to cover that underworld from which no city of any size anywhere is free. (The names given these men are not their true names.)

Army officers will tell you that it is not action, but the unavoidable delays and waits that weaken the morale of the soldier. Our men were not immune from the effects of waiting and watching for a slip that could be seized upon and turned to our advantage. Graham, the one who had been covering the underworld, in Arcachon, was the first to break under the strain. Believing that he was of no use and ready to admit defeat, he decided to come in.

Graham had lived long enough in France before the war to have absorbed some of the volatile temperament of the French. When working on a hot clue he never tired or gave up, but he did not have the stamina to withstand inaction. Always working in civilian clothes, speaking French like a native, he easily passed for a Frenchman. In fact his disguise was so perfect that on more than one occasion insinuations had been made that he should be at the front with the rest of the poilus. So when on Sunday afternoon he boarded the train and took a seat in a compartment already occupied by three American officers they thought him merely one more Frenchman and continued their talk. Graham, too down-hearted to pay any attention to their conversation, stared disconsolately out of the window.

Jests and banter flew back and forth among these three young officers returning to their regiments after a two weeks' leave at Arcachon. One would recall an amusing incident and all would join in the laugh — and then another, in turn. Their leave had apparently been a joyous one for them. Their jokes had made no impression on Graham, until the conversation shifted to certain women, Madame Boudin, Madame Fountain, and Mlle. Brisson, and as the talk now became more personal, Graham, although he still continued his stare out of the window, was all attention.

"Bill," said one, "what would your girl back in the States say if she knew how friendly you had been with Madame? Guess I'll have to write her and put her wise!"

"Well," drawled Bill, "I reckon if my girl did find out she would be sore; but if she knew that I had permitted Madame to pay the bills, I sure would be gone for good!"

"Never mind, Bill," replied the other officer, called Cole, "we are all in the same boat. Those women were mighty good to us. They knew that we could not splurge on the pay of a second lieutenant — it was right enough that they help pay the bills."

But Graham well knew the French character and he could not for the life of him comprehend why three French-women, of whatever strata of society, should pay for the entertainment when men were in the party. "It isn't done, that's all!!" Thinking it over, Graham came to the conclusion that his leaving his post at Arcachon was for the best. If French-women were entertaining American officers and paying the bills, it was something to be investigated and investigated quickly.

While our troops were in France one characteristic of theirs stood out above all others in the minds of the French-women. It was one almost universal among both the officers and the men — the habit of treating all women with respect. It seemed beyond the conception of the average American that a woman could do the work of a spy. Germany also knew this trait of the Americans and whenever she wanted information from them, if possible, she sent women after it.

The women in Germany's secret service were attractive, prepossessing, suave, and polished. They were at home either in the drawing room or in the peasant's home. They had been well trained in the art of taking advantage of the chivalrous nature of our men. Many a pleasant, quiet-mannered woman, laying herself out to comfort a poor, homesick boy, sickened with all the horrors of war, was in reality in the pay of the German government and while so sympathetic and helpful was all the time carefully plying him with questions and gaining much information of value to the German High Command. They were extremely clever, these women spies.

Graham lost no time in reporting to us the conversation that he had overheard on the train; and although we did not connect the spendthrift French-women with the leak at Camp Hunt, nevertheless, our training had

taught us never to overlook the most trivial happening. So Lieutenant Greene was called in and assigned to investigate these women.

Lieutenant Greene was the "Beau Brummel" of our force. Well equipped by nature and training to pass as an innocent young fellow just out from home, his open, frank countenance and smiling, blue eyes would never lead one to suspect that behind it all lay one of the keenest and brightest minds in the service. More than one clever operator had discovered, when it was too late, that instead of making a tool out of this young officer, the tables had been turned and she instead was the dupe. Greene, by preference, would have been at the front; but he was too valuable here and although the work was extremely distasteful to him, he was just the type to deal with the women we encountered in our work. He had been universally successful in his assignments involving women.

"Lieutenant," I instructed, "you will proceed to Archachon prepared to remain there indefinitely. You are to work in uniform. Your pass states that you are just out of the hospital and that you belong to a siege battery on the front. In the Grande Hotel are three young women who are making a practice of entertaining American officers; you will study these women, watch their movements, note what they are doing, whom they entertain, what is said at the entertainments and who says it. You will observe what these women do when there are no officers around. Do not make their acquaintance, but see if you can learn who and what they are — no love-making until you are further instructed. We shall check them up as far as the French status is concerned, so you will not have to cover that angle. Here are your papers. Good-bye and good luck!"

### A Dangerous Fool

As fast as the train would take him, Greene went to Arcachon and established himself at the Grande Hotel. He made a point of becoming confidential with the manager, telling him that he had been shell-shocked and was just recovering from the effects of it. He didn't care to meet anyone and asked for a table by himself and a quiet room. Greene was one to attract attention anywhere and, even while he was being shown his room, the younger of the three women was busily engaged in making inquiries about him from the manager. News among such people travels quickly, and by the time Greene had returned to the lobby his story was all over the hotel. His request that he be left alone gave him an opportunity to study the other guests at his leisure and a few tactful questions enabled him to learn which of the guests was known as Madame Boudin, Madame Fountain, and Mlle. Brisson. Even on the night of his arrival these women were entertaining a party of young officers from Camp Hunt. Greene without apparent effort, succeeded in securing a table adjacent to the party and was able to see and overhear all that went on at that table. Wine flowed freely, and it was not very long before the tongues of the officers were loosened and Greene was hearing them tell things that would have meant a court martial for them if he had been their commanding general.

Skillfully these women led the conversation around to the size of our guns, to the number of the men in the batteries, when they came over, and to other various timely topics that would be of interest to the German High Command. Greene, listening intently, believed that here was the source of the leak. Were not these women far too inquisitive for innocent French society leaders? Must there not be some sinister motive behind it all?

On the following night they entertained other officers and the same program was carried out — a good dinner, plenty of wine, and the same clever questioning.

Greene's first report to us convinced us that we had made no mistake in starting our investigation of Madame Boudin, Madame Fountain, and Mlle. Brisson. When his second report came in, it crystallized our half-formed suspicions that these three dames were far deeper than they appeared from a superficial observation.

"Night before last," read Greene's report, "these women entertained an officer who apparently knows all about our transport sailings. I noticed, as the wine began to flow freely, that Madame Boudin did not join in with the others. The result was that as Madame Fountain and Mlle. Brisson plied the officer with wine and his wits became fuddled, Madame Boudin, by careful questions and insinuations, finally wormed from this officer the fact that a convoy of ships from the States was expected within the next three days. As he became more and more under the influence of the wine he began to brag that the American Navy had driven the German submarines off the seas; that they did not dare attack the American transports; that the Port of Bordeaux was cleared from the menace of the submarine; and that our ships could now come and go without fear of trouble.

"I had all I could do to hold myself in check when I knew, in my own heart, that this fool officer was jeopardizing those brave men who were bringing across the seas the supplies for our troops. . . ."

Bordeaux is not on the coast, but lies about thirty miles up the Gironde River. For centuries the river has been carrying down and depositing sediment at its mouth until today there is a mud bar across the entrance which prevents the deep sea steamers from passing except at high tide. Our transports laying by, waiting for the tide to come in, were an easy mark for the German submarines. . . .

Even as we were reading Greene's report, we were informed that the subs had sunk two of the convoy mentioned by that fool officer. His hostesses, if they were responsible for this, had certainly worked fast.

Our department had been criticized for not turning the information at hand over to the French so that they could arrest them and prevent them from doing any more damage. Suspicion and proof are vastly different things and if we had turned these women over to the French our proof would not have been sufficient to have convicted them. We had not discovered how they operated; and until we could close the trap on the entire group, we must of necessity wait. Our hearts said:

"Stop these women from doing any more damage." Our judgment replied:

"What good will that do unless we get them all. If we take these three, three more will spring up to take their places and carry on the work. Wait until we can catch the master minds" — and judgment won.

They all roomed together in No. 27. That was another suspicious circumstance, seeing that they were such fine ladies. The French are economical, to be sure, but perhaps this was more the economy of the German government? In any case it helped us. It made it the easier to follow their private conversation. A dictagraph was placed in their room, and for hours at a stretch Greene sat in the adjoining room with the receivers glued to his ears waiting for a word that

would disclose the method and who was behind it all. But if these women ever talked over their plans in their rooms, they did it in so low a tone of voice that the machine would not register. However, if only some of those officers who had prided themselves on their conquests could have heard what Greene heard when listening, they would have had a far different opinion of their ability as social lions, so uncomplimentary were their remarks.

One night Greene was sitting on his window ledge studying the windows of Madame Boudin's room when all at once he discovered that she was using a powerful flashlight and apparently was signalling across the bay; but even with his glasses he could not see an answering flash. This was the way they passed the information on to the next station. Closely watching the flashes, Greene discovered that they were just a series of two flashes, then three, then two, and again three and so on; they were not using a standard code.

On the following day, when the three sirens went out for their customary daily sail on the bay, Greene watched them through his glasses as they made their way directly for the opposite shore. The glasses showed him that they made a landing near our Naval Hydroplane station. Were they making a friendly visit or what were they doing?

If they were making a practice of signalling each night, it was necessary for us to get busy immediately. O'Riley and Rich were at once sent down. Their instructions were to check up on those night signals, and, if possible, discover the receiving station.

### Hide and Seek

Under the cover of darkness they drifted around Arcachon Bay in a row boat — no child's play. Of all the work entailed in gathering the evidence in this case, none took the courage shown in these lonely vigils out on that bay. Rough, cold, blustery it grew out there; and several times thunder storms came up which not only drenched the two men to the skin, but the squalls which accompanied the showers threatened to cut short their careers by upsetting them into the waters of the bay; while the marshes contributed their share of discomforts by sending myriads of mosquitoes to bite and pester them. It seemed as if the very mosquitoes must have been in league with the Germans, they tried so hard to force the men in off the bay. This dismal watch went on for several nights unrewarded.

But at length success came. Rich caught the flash, and for the next half hour these two faithful secret service men, in torture all the while from the hordes of mosquitoes, watched for an answering flash from the other shore. The men noticed that these women used great precaution in their signalling, not daring to come to the window where all the world might see, but working from the back of the room so that the rays of light would be directed one way.

The work had speeded up so fast that a daily, or rather nightly, conference between Greene and myself was a necessity. Extreme care had to be taken in the holding of these meetings so that Greene would not be uncovered. Knowing that some of the American officers on leave there might know me and in answer to a casual question disclose my identity to the very ones we were shadowing, arrangements were made that the conferences be held far up the beach. Here, late at night after the conspirators had retired, huddled together, with guards around to keep off any eavesdropper, and with the stars looking down, we planned and plotted the downfall of this clique. These consultations usually lasted until long after midnight; and when they were over that dreary thirty mile trip back to Bordeaux had to be made. Many a night, while this case was on, the only sleep I had was what could be snatched by curling up on the rear seat of the automobile on the return.

We knew that the women did not signal every night and we certainly did want them to. But if they were to signal they must have information; so Greene planned to break his reserve and join in their parties. Through the manager of the hotel it was not difficult for Greene to obtain an introduction, particularly as the youngest of the three had been casting amorous glances in Greene's direction for some little time. Mlle. Brisson at once claimed Greene as her special victim.

### "Hoch!" — the High Command

Greene was well supplied with false information to give them and, before many hours had passed, he was confiding it all to Mlle. Brisson. When this information reached the German High Command they must have congratulated themselves on the clever women whom they had sent to Arcachon, so voluminous was it. We have often wondered if the German High Command acted upon *some* of the information which Greene so generously furnished them. If they did, and later on checked up the results with the original information received, the air at German headquarters must have been very blue and somebody must have suffered for the disastrous blundering.

Greene's information kept Madame Boudin busy. Each night the flash talked to the other shore; each day the women went out in the boat for a sail. But in spite of our zeal we were unable to catch these clever operators napping. It was absolutely necessary that we locate the person who was receiving the flashes and *at once*, before our false information redounded to our discredit. It was purely a question of angles and lines. Exactly how far on the opposite shore did those signals register?

If they could be seen for miles up and down that coast then we might be months in finding the receiver, if we ever did. It was a question of days with us, however, so we appealed to the Navy to help us out in our extremity. Two naval officers with chart and compass soon solved this difficulty for us. The results of their survey centered our efforts on a short stretch of the shore. More men were detailed on the case, and every night the houses in the district mapped out for us by the naval officers were watched. At last we found the right one. It was occupied by a man who claimed to be a Belgian who, stranded in Paris by the war and unable to return to his home, had finally come here to live, across the bay from Arcachon.

If we were to keep a close watch on this man we must place one of our own men under his roof. By the time the United States had entered the war France's secret service in the rear had been sadly depleted for duty at the front. The French welcomed the new blood that we brought to such work and at all times co-operated with us one hundred percent. It was a simple matter, then, for us to have the French arrest the Belgian's cook on a trumped up charge of desertion and in his place install the man that we suggested.

We were not obliged to wait very long for the confirmation that at last we were hot on the right trail. Our chap in the Belgian's house soon discovered that after the women flashed the signals and the next day took their customary sail, the Belgian also would go out on the bay in his power boat. After every time that he

went out on such a trip he, that same night, would flash signals toward the point where there were more cottages.

Speedily transferring our men who had been watching the cottages on the opposite shore from Arcachon, we immediately set them to watch the houses at the Point. One of the men discovered that one cottage, far removed from the others, was sending flashes out to sea at night. These flashes were sent on the even hour and began at nine o'clock, then at ten, and so on until twelve o'clock, or until answered by a red light flashing from the sea. During the next morning, after such a night of signalling, the man who lived in the isolated house would, while in swimming, make his way out to a ledge off shore. Climbing up on the rocks, he would apparently rest for some little time, then slowly swim back to the shore.

Greene believed that his hand would be greatly strengthened with the women if he were arrested and then released. So we arrested him on a trumped up charge of overstaying his leave. With a great show of indignation, Greene demanded his release and of course we allowed him apparently to fool us. This, as he thought, gave him added prestige in the eyes of the women. He confided to Mlle. Brisson, the one to whom he was so devoted, that he intended to remain where he was as long as possible. His parents were German born, so he said, and that, while he had been forced either to take a commission in the army or be drafted, he didn't intend to fight his own flesh and blood if by any means he could avoid it.

We now had gathered together all the loose ends of our case and it was time to start closing the jaws of our trap. Care had to be taken, however, that the movement of the jaws as they closed did not frighten away our suspects so that they would escape being crushed. Consequently we fell back on the old method of creating female strife.

### The Old Game

Although Greene had never in so many words promised to marry Mlle. Brisson, he had led her to believe that after the war they would be married. (So sure of her conquest was Mlle. Brisson that she had boasted of it to her other companions.) Then suddenly out of a clear sky and without any apparent reason, Greene picked a quarrel with Mlle. Brisson and devoted his attention to Madam Boudin. Confiding to her that Mlle. Brisson had no reason for saying that they were to be married, he quickly gained Madame Boudin's good graces. Greene was a likable fellow and it was not long before he announced that at last he had the right girl for his wife and intended to marry her as soon as possible. The next day after this announcement, Madame Boudin appeared with a solitaire. . . . Greene in order to make good his promise had been forced to purchase it for Madame; of course he expected to recover it when the denouncement came, but somehow Madame Boudin secreted it and we never got it back. Our expense account for this case required quite a bit of explaining to the chief when he went over it and found an item which read: "One solitaire diamond ring . . . . . 300 Francs." . . . . . .

When Madame Boudin appeared with the solitaire the fun commenced. Consumed with rage and jealousy, Mlle. Brisson lost her self control entirely. Accusations and counter accusations flew fast and furiously around the head of Greene and he soon had the complete story.

Cruising along the French coast was a German submarine whose duty it was to pick up the information gathered by the various spies and take it direct to Germany. Receiving word of the expected arrival or sailing of a convoy, our trio signalled the news to the Belgian's house across the bay, and the Belgian, in turn, would pass it on to the Point; from there they would pass the news to some submarine, which, in turn, would wireless the news to some other submarine in the vicinity.

If, however, they had what they classed as general information, they would signal in a different manner and then the next day would go out in the boat and drop the message overboard in a small bottle so weighted that it would sink, but having a small float attached; this bottle was always dropped in the same place.

The supposed Belgian would then come out in his boat, pick up the bottle, and keep it until he had notified the man at the Point that he had a message to pass on to Germany. On the following morning he would take his boat and cruise around the Point at the time the cottagers there were in bathing and, passing close to the shore, would hand or drop the message overboard to the man from the house who, having watched him coming with his boat would swim far enough out so that no one would suspect that anything was going on.

The swimmer would then hide the message under his bathing suit, carry it into his house, and keep it until he had a chance to notify the submarine that he had a message. When he knew that the submarine had received his signals, he would swim out to that ledge and secrete it there. That night the captain of the submarine would send in a boat to get it, and together with other messages picked up along the coast would return to Germany. No doubt there were many such stations along the French coast that harvested much valuable information for Germany. *This was the method used. . . . and once more a jealous woman had upset the carefully thought out plans of the German Secret Service.* We could now "Plug that leak!"

With a full knowledge of the methods of transmitting the information out of France and into Germany and all the spies involved, and with plenty of evidence at hand to convict, we decided to at once arrest the entire group. So that neither Madame Boudin nor Madame Fountain nor Mlle. Brisson could possibly spread the alarm, they were placed under close guard in their rooms. Meanwhile men were detailed to raid both houses where, as we knew, the master minds were located.

All watches were set to the minute and at nine o'clock that same night the arrests were to be made. In some way the Belgian discovered us before we could gain an entrance to his home and, fleeing up-stairs to his room, he barricaded the door. Just as we were forcing the door we heard the shot which instantly ended his life. The man at the Point we arrested; but before he could be brought to trial he succeeded in hanging himself in his cell. The rest were tried and convicted. The ringleaders were sentenced to death, while the minor crooks were sent to the French penal colony in Africa.

The arrest and conviction of these spies frightened any others who might have been working in this neighborhood. But for fear that the German High Command, knowing full well what a gold mine of information this city was, would send others, Arcachon was placed "off limits" for all American troops; for where there were no troops the information available would not pay for the risk involved.

# The Renaissance of the Buffalo

(*Continued from page 63*)

There were 4,668 buffalo in the Wainwright Park at the opening of 1921, according to the count of the park authorities. Of these 1,148 were 1920 calves. It is a fact of curious interest that practically all the Wainwright buffalo are descendants of four wild calves captured in Montana in 1873, the offspring of which became the foundation of the Pablo herd. The rate of increase from such a small beginning was at first slow. It will be much more rapid in the future. The Wainwright Park will support 25,000 bison and at the rate the herd is growing, it should contain that number within fifteen years.

It is practically certain that all the rich prairie lands about Wainwright will be thickly settled in fifteen years. Then the park will remain an island of virgin wilderness surrounded on all sides by the cultivated fields and homes of prosperous farmers. The park's mesh-wire fence will hold back the crowding tides of civilization and preserve undisturbed this fragment of the aboriginal past dedicated to the buffalo as their home in perpetuity. The problem will then be no longer one of increase, but of keeping the herd within the capacity of these wild pasturelands to maintain. This can be done only by slaughtering a certain number annually for market. The time is probably not far distant when buffalo meat will become once more the ordinary delicacy of American tables.

The fight to preserve the buffalo from extinction is already won. The Canadian government's efforts at Wainwright acted as a spur to the United States government, which now maintains bison in nine parks. These parks with the number in each at the opening of 1920, when the last census of the American Bison Society was published, are: Montana Bison Range, 298; Yellowstone National Park, 502; Wichita National Forest and Game reserve, Oklahoma, 119; Wind Cave National Park, South Dakota, 55; Niobrara Reservation, Nebraska, 21; National Zoological Park, Washington, D. C., 21; Pisgah National Forest and Game Preserve, North Carolina, 6; Platt National Park, Oklahoma, 3; Sullys Hill Park, North Dakota, 7. The total number of animals in the national parks at that time was 1,032. This figure will be largely increased by the calves of 1920 and 1921.

The total number of buffalo in the United States at the beginning of 1920 was 3,393 and in Canada 5,080, according to the Bison Society census. The largest herd in the United States is that of the James Phillip estate at Pierre, S. D., which numbered 825. Two other large privately owned herds are that of John E. Dooley on Antelope Island in Great Salt Lake, numbering 300, and the Goodnight herd of Texas, numbering 157.

The American Bison Society puts the total number of buffalo on the North American continent in 1920 at 8,473. This figure is based on actual count except for an estimate of 500 head in a wild herd that has been known for years to exist in the Mackenzie river basin. F. H. Kitto of the Natural Resources Intelligence Branch of the Canadian Department of the Interior, who returned recently from the top of the continent, said that he had sighted a herd northwest of Great Slave Lake which he estimated at 1,000 head and that Indians told him a herd of equal size roamed the Mackenzie valley a hundred miles farther north. If Kitto's estimates are correct, they mean a material addition to the buffalo population of the continent.

Only 800 buffalo of the 60,000,000 that once inhabited North America were extant in the world in 1895. In view of this hair-breadth escape from extinction, the recrudescence of this race of noble brutes has been memorable. Now the future of the bison is assured. Children of to-day, it is safe to predict, will live to see 50,000 buffalo multiplying their kind and enjoying virtually the wild freedom of old prairie days in the national parks of the United States and Canada.

# A Negro Named Jones

(*Continued from page 80*)

A little thing? Not at all! It's a very big thing. Earnest, moral, well-bred, scrupulously courteous and modest men and women like these, giving their lives for their race and ours, have got to retain their self-respect if they are to succeed, and *that's* what Mississippi and the South are taking from them. What can we expect from a race whose wives and mothers are denied the shelter of that conventional designation accorded to every other married woman everywhere?

And this has nothing to do with "preventing social equality," and "preserving the purity of the white race." It is illogical to connect them. Let us be very wary of doing concrete evil under those slogans in order that hypothetical good may come. Nothing whatever except self-respect on the respectable Negro's part need follow from giving him the title that all other respectable citizens receive. And, as a nation, we must do what we can to hold up the hands of that class of Negroes to which the graduated 'Fessor and his wife belong. The United States has need of it.

It is a class that is weary of our national habit of regarding the American Negro as an exclusively comic figure. The race would be more grateful than we fortunate whites could ever understand for an honest interest in its members as human beings; for a long overdue attempt on our part to look behind the blackface *pagliacci* that our public prints have manufactured and see men and women there, whose lives are summaries of myriads of at least partially comprehensible and controllable influences, just as ours are.

They are men and women with whom the Republic must presently reckon, whose friendship the Republic needs, and who, for their sakes and ours, should have full representation before the tribunal whose verdicts affect the roots of the prosperity of all our sorts and conditions of men — the Supersupreme Court of American public opinion

*There in his big barren studio she seemed younger, simpler, more spontaneous*

# The Girl Who Couldn't Say No

## By Dana Gatlin

Illustrated by Irma Dérèmaux

WHEN Bruce Hewitt first met Neva Shotter he must needs wonder what made such a woman accept so lackadaisically her incongruous setting; and the wonder piqued his interest in the late Tom Shotter's wife.

It was at a studio tea an artist friend was giving to the subject of a new portrait and also to the subject's wealthiest friends. Bruce had come near not going. He mentally anathematized the whole business as a "prostitution of art." He, himself did not propose to prostitute his art. He was young and very earnest. He had just returned from two years of Paris and Spain — a sojourn eked out of a small legacy from the Connecticut uncle who had reared him — and, upheld now by that youth and earnestness and rather bitter defiance, was "making some money" at commercial advertising against the day when he could paint the landscape masterpieces of his dreams. But he did not call this commercial makeshift "art." And he was irritated by the menagerie-function given in art's name, to the overdressed, common wife of a grafting politician and to her overdressed and common herd. He was making up an excuse to get quickly away when, all of a sudden, he wasn't quite so sorry he had come and forgot about getting away.

Neva Shotter caught his attention first because she was so pretty — no, not "pretty"; she was either beautiful else with those odd, irregular features, almost plain; only it would be stupid to call her plain. She was altogether out of keeping with this blatant vapidity. He sought an introduction, but she didn't talk much; yet the very absence of reiterant banalities was enough to make her stand out — instinctively he felt she had taste and intelligence. And this was the widow of Tom

Shotter, the notorious! He had to wonder how the marriage had been possible.

In his gratification and questioning — was she beautiful or was she not? — he was not sharply conscious of other impressions and reactions. Her hair was good but not remarkable; satiny-brown with reddish glints. And her odd, elongated eyes were the same color. Her mouth, rather too large, was interesting with that abstracted half-smile, half-thoughtful and half-frivolously amused.

And then, all at once, it rushed over him that what gave her her individuality, and what lifted her from the ranks of the merely plain to the beautiful did not lie in her features at all. It lay in her expression — in something underneath, which came flickering to the surface and then passed; a momentary amused shine of those brown eyes, and a brief shade of thoughtfulness before they went back to their semi-bored, polite inscrutability; a quaint upward twist to the mouth, else a down-turned, brooding, swiftly-lost little smile.

With her impersonally courteous air she opened conversation about his own work: He was an artist, also —? What was his "line"? And Bruce, equally casual and polite, replied with sardonic humility, "commercial advertising." She looked a trifle surprised; just a trifle, but it prompted him to inquire whether she was interested in art.

"Oh, no," with a shrug of her slim shoulders. She glanced round the strident, luxurious studio and smiled ironically. "A glimpse of this should effect a cure, I think. A definite cure, even if one had ever been afflicted by a — what d'you call it? — a 'divine vision!' "

Her sophisticated amusement was as if enameled over a soft and plastic inertia. (She was, he decided, like so many women who lead idle, pampered lives, at once too soft and too hard.)

"What's your idea of a 'divine vision'?" He was not quite openly ironical only because his tone paid a man's tribute to a pretty woman.

Mrs. Shotter shrugged again.

"Oh, we all go through that stage, don't we? — some time, in one form or another? When we like to bury our heads in the sands of mystery and wait for something wonderful to happen. But by-and-by we find that the most wonderful thing in the world is that nothing wonderful ever happens."

She tilted her head slightly and looked at him with a tranquil, quizzical smile from under the brim of her hat. The pose, the smile, made her look more charming than ever, but for some reason he wished she hadn't put on exactly that expression.

And again he thought of Tom Shotter. He had seen the famous — or infamous — politician on one or two occasions. And he could still call up the picture of him, a huge and solid man with a notably light, well-poised and also deliberate step that went almost appallingly well with his look of conscious power. He had had his right to that look, for Tom Shotter, by his own standards, had been a tremendously successful man. But success had accentuated the coarseness, and crudity, and vulgarity that fed the fire of his being.

Presently Bruce was surprised to hear himself broaching an entirely unpremeditated proposition.

Mrs. Shotter had, in that frivolous yet composed way of hers, made some comment on the portrait of the occasion. And then:

"I had my portrait done once — rather, my husband had it done. And there was an exhibition — something like this. He knew it was tomfoolery, of course, but said it was 'good business.' But it's rather terrible."

Queer, how under her light and casual phrasing, Bruce got a sharp sense of that other exhibition: Tom Shotter, condescending and contemptuous toward art in any form, yet impressed and pleased with a certain grandiloquence in having your wife's picture exhibited — held up to public admiration! Complacently esteeming himself a clever fellow in having the silly picture done!

"Was it a good portrait?" Bruce asked.

"Well, it flattered me enough — I should have been pleased."

And then it was he made his unpremeditated proposition:

"I wish you'd let me paint you. I'd love to paint you."

She elevated her brows in frank surprise. "Why, I thought you did commercial posters."

Bruce flushed a little. "My real aspiration's to do landscapes," he admitted. Then, rather eagerly: "I didn't mean to propose it as a commission. Just to try it out, and see what'd come of it — that was my intention. I've dabbled a bit in portraiture, you know. I'd love to see what I could make of you. Just as a kind of lark — what do you say?"

MRS. Shotter looked up at him, her eyes momentarily arrested, attentive, thoughtful; then they changed, and that glimmer of bantering, sophisticated amusement came back to them as she said lightly:

"I'll think it over — it might be fun, mightn't it? Give me your address and I'll let you know."

The portrait was begun. It was never finished. But no picture could have ranked as the important outcome of that venture.

Friendship between the pair ripened quickly. Mrs. Shotter gave him two sittings a week; there in his big barren studio her air of sophistication lessened and faded; she seemed younger, simpler, more spontaneous. At times a sort of young-old wistfulness would come to linger darkly in her eyes. But, mostly sympathetic, her moods were merry, and he found it more than easy, while he worked, to talk with her.

What did they talk about? . . . Is it their subjects that count when two young people spend hours together and find each other congenial?

But what Bruce reflected on was that nothing in her talk gave any key to that mystery of her which was fascinating him more and more. For all her warm friendliness, and apparent simplicity, she was singularly non-revealing. So he found himself, as time went on, continually wondering: How had this creature of such delicate, vivid charm ever taken on that veneer of worldly acquiescence? How could she fraternize with crass vulgarians, apparently her intimate friends? Of course, they had probably been Tom Shotter's friends — but this brought, once more, the most tantalizing question of all: How had she ever married a Tom Shotter?

Of course, Tom Shotter had been rich. In his position of power in "the Party," and with the privilege such a position entails, he had got tremendously rich; and, so firmly entrenched, he had successfully weathered periodic arraignments and "exposures." But somehow it galled Bruce to think that Neva — already in his thoughts he was calling her "Neva" — could have married that man for that ill-gotten wealth.

And one day, hardly conscious of his rudeness, he blurted out:

"Money means a lot to you, doesn't it?"

A trace of flush wavered on her cheeks — he wondered whether it were a flag of anger. But she answered

calmly: "As a matter of fact, it does — but why do you ask?"

Bruce mixed some paint rather viciously.

"Oh, I just wondered — thought it did." Then, even more rudely — and, this time, curiously bent on being rude: "Well, it's a good thing you have plenty."

"Yes, I have plenty." Then, with an odd little smile: "I'll always have plenty — that is, if I never marry again."

At that he looked a frank interrogation, and Neva, after a hesitant pause, continued: "You see, my husband left me his fortune on the provision I shouldn't remarry."

That was true to Tom Shotter's character, Bruce thought. Vaunting his power and his pride of exclusive possession to the end, Shotter had sought to perpetuate his power even after his end. So long as Mrs. Tom Shotter remained Mrs. Tom Shotter she would "have plenty." And she had admitted that money meant a lot to her.

THIS little talk didn't serve to bring him much gratification; but, not long after, he found himself trying to draw her out again.

"You know I've been wondering about you," he began; he felt the words were inept, but couldn't find the right ones. "Wondering what you find to occupy yourself with."

"Find to occupy myself with?" She laughed good-naturedly. "Why, dear Mr. Artist, my great difficulty is wedging in all my occupations!"

"But what do you *do?*" he persisted.

She shrugged, but with no hint of annoyance. "Oh, a hundred things. There's dancing, and dressmaker's fittings, and the theatre — I'm vain of my reputation as a first-nighter, you know." Again he noted that hint of delicate raillery, ironic yet acquiescent. "And then I play cards — principally, I play cards, I suppose — belong to bridge clubs for nearly every afternoon in the week. I'm really sort of card-mad," she admitted naïvely. "Always have been — the excitement and stimulation of it, I suppose. In our family they used to whisper direful stories about an uncle of mine — he was a gambler, a sort of black sheep. I must have inherited the family taint, I suppose."

"And does your family approve of your passion?" Bruce couldn't forbear asking.

"Oh, they've never been present," she replied, laughing. "They're conveniently two thousand miles away."

"I see," said Bruce, though he didn't see entirely. Mrs. Shotter proceeded:

"I never had a chance to gamble till I came to New York. Oh, I took to New York like a duck takes to water! Only I got myself in hot water! Got outrageously in debt. I used to say," with an air of brooding yet subtly amused retrospect, "that my only salvation would be to find me a millionaire and marry him."

It was on Bruce's tongue to say, "And you did!" But he bit off the words and, instead, remarked:

"And now, of course, you have opportunity to read, see pictures, travel, and meet people worth while — do things worth while."

He spoke that last phrase involuntarily, regretting the phrasing too late; but Mrs. Shotter seemed oblivious, passed it over.

"Oh, I used to read," she said, "but not much these late years — haven't had the time."

Hadn't had the time! And how placidly she spoke! Once more that savage irritation gathered in the man — and a sense of hurt, too; incredible hurt.

His work on the portrait lagged that day. It didn't progress at all at the next sitting, but from different reasons. Mrs. Shotter had come that morning a little heavy-eyed and listless, apologizing for her tardiness that she wasn't feeling very well — not ill, but just let down.

"I get that way now and then," she admitted, "sort of depressed and bored with life. Been going it too hard, I suppose — and maybe it's partly the spring. It's spring out in the country, you know."

Then Bruce made an impulsive suggestion:

"I tell you what! I've a place up in the Connecticut hills — the place where I was brought up — it's spring up there! Let's motor up and find the spring!"

She demurred at first but, in the end, he hired a motor and the two of them, Bruce Hewitt the struggling painter and Tom Shotter's rich, gold-enchained widow, went forth to find the spring.

The hired car was costing him, for his modest finances, an exorbitant sum; but, as they left the roaring, brick-walled avenues, left the last huddled tenements and the last straggling stretch of the city behind them, and as they passed the trailing suburbs and entered at last into the kingdom of the hills, Bruce had no compunctions for his extravagance. The hills were robed for the shining pageantry of May, the south wind sang a slumbrous refrain, bright little buds and leaves jeweled the trees, blushing apple blossoms glorified passing orchards, and through the very heart of the loveliness the road threaded its unhurried way.

They stopped somewhere for luncheon, just where it doesn't matter — it didn't matter to them. Then they followed the unhurried road again, turning here and turning there, but never for long leaving the hills.

It was toward the end of a long, drowsy street in a little drowsy village that, at last, Bruce halted the car. He halted it in front of an old colonial house, a plain, unpretentious house whose clapboards needed paint and whose shutters here and there hung askew. It sat there looking benignantly out across the tall elms and the one gnarled little cherry tree beside the gate, across to the soft-breasted hills in the western distance; an unpretentious house, but something about it — the drowsy windows rubbing the vines from their eyes with the breeze, the play of sun and shadow under the new-leaved boughs, the color and scent of burgeoning lilacs a-swing, while over yonder, across and beyond the sun-gilded roofs of the village, the clouds drifted and wove lazy patterns of ever changing beauty above the hills — something about it was like one who wins you with a sweet and confiding smile.

"This is where I was born," Bruce said simply. "It still belongs to me — I wanted you to see it."

They went inside, into the shadowy hush inside. The long untenanted house was still complete with its quaint old-fashioned furnishings. As Bruce threw open the shutters the sun filtered through the dusty air, showing thick gray coatings on the white-painted mantelpiece, on the table-tops of bare mahogany, and on the surface of the ancient square piano. The May air stole in through the leaf-blowzed windows, undefinably sweet.

They began to talk more now, excitedly, laughingly, as children talk and laugh in some adventurous play. Neva wanted to hear the tall grandfather's clock tick, so Bruce wound it up; and its slow thrumming note intensified that pervasive quiet. Then he wanted her to try the piano; it was out of tune and thin-throated and quavering, but, as she sat there in the gloom of its corner and sang old ballads in a soft, muted way, all the shadows about her seemed to become sweeter with an

aching kind of sweetness. He had not known she could sing so well — that she could sing at all. Vague longing stirred in him and flowed out to meet those muted sounds. Yet, too, the singing, the picture of her there at the old square piano amongst the shadows brought him ease; heart's ease, blessedly soothing, crowding out even the dread of when this moment must pass.

The minutes sped into hours, and a sense of profound intimacy grew up and quivered between them; stole into them and pervaded them.

It was under this spell, of deep and delicious uneventful companionship, that Neva, at last, began to talk about herself: her youth, her history, her hidden innermost self.

They had dragged two big chairs out to the broad, side porch. Neva had taken off her hat, and the bright afternoon light shimmered on her hair. She looked pale, and under the pitiless daylight not so perfected, so artificially "finished" as was her city aspect; yet he liked her better there, infinitely better. Her air of sophistication had vanished — she seemed young and natural and unspoiled.

She gazed out at the tall trees, the quiet street, the soft-bosomed hills in the distance; her eyes, softening and brightening, made him think a curious phrase — "melted brown sapphires."

"How wonderful," she said, speaking dreamily, contentedly. "Just to sit, not to be bothered by — things. Bothersome things all far away. I'd forgotten . . . " Her speech trailed off, as her eyes gazed out to the hills and beyond.

"Forgotten?" he questioned softly after a throb of silence.

"Yes. I'm from the West. I came, like so many young ardents, pursuing a 'career.' "

The subtle inflection of that last was not exactly ironic, but there was the slightest flicker of the so characteristic amusement. It served to sober Bruce strangely. He was young, but in that instant he felt suddenly old and sadly wise and mournfully impotent; a vague and vast pity welled up in him — pity not only for her, but for all the youth that keeps forever pouring in from all the nooks and crannies of the land; pouring itself into the calloused heart of the big uncaring metropolis, the glittering Mecca of the land's ambitious youth; glittering but hard and not caring, casually accepting all that warm, eager life-current and absorbing its throb and pulse for a while, and then, when *it* had got parched and arid and hardened too, casually turning to a new supply — always a new supply of vital youth to stimulate the city's brick-bound heart. . . .

Under the spell of the spring weather and of that close, delicious companionship, Neva talked on. She told of her early ambitions — good judges had said she had a "voice." But the city had quickly "got her." She had made friends — a new and exciting and fascinating kind of friends; and they — and the diverting, exciting things they were always doing — had made it hard to stick to work. Of course, she loved her work and wanted, oh, terrifically, to make good — at times she'd had desperate fits of remorse and horror when she realized how she was letting all her dreams and aspirations just go to pot. She would make penitent resolutions: There'd be an end to this folly — she'd settle down — oh, never had there been anyone more staid and persevering and unassailable than she was going to be! Then someone would come knocking at her door or the telephone would ring — and high endeavor was all off!

Bruce, listening, felt a tug of comprehending sympathy; he could almost hear those teasing voices at the door and those bewheedlements over the wire. He knew how it went. There had been a period when he, too, had all but been sucked under by Folly. By that sort of glamorous, deceptive tide which invisibly, insidiously, tirelessly, plays over the big city; the love of pleasure, bidding you to reckon not of to-morrow provided only you get your good time to-day. And plenty of devotees always riding buoyantly on its surface, ignoring all rocks and shoals. Yes, plenty of them, countless "groups" of these blithe, determinedly unthinking time-killers; and especially, and with especial tragedy, were they to be found where Youth had once thought to mate with High Achievement — enough time for achievement to-morrow; to-day we must play, to-night we must dance!

Bruce seemed to see little groups of them, flushed and hilarious and irresponsible, foregathering for lunch or for dinner; dancing through the night — then, when night and carousal time was over, creeping pallidly home to await and begin another to-day. For, of course, and particularly for the devotees of Folly, to-morrow never comes.

"I WAS utterly spineless — had no backbone at all," Neva was proceeding. She gave a little sigh. "It was really dreadful — it seemed I could never say 'no'. And I ignored or lost my chances, my voice went bad, and I piled up frightful debts: for a time there I didn't really know what would become of me — what might or might not be the end."

Into Bruce's mind, unpleasantly, flew the recollection of a banteringly ironic phrase — "used to say my only salvation would be to find me a millionaire and marry him!"

An ugly surmise! And, if true, how much of a "salvation" had Tom Shotter proved?

He forced himself to inquire:

"But after you were married — didn't you do anything with your voice after?"

"No, my husband had no interest in music."

Not the words, but something under the words, jarred on him; jarred the more because of this past intimate hour. But he made himself persevere:

"Well, then, since you've been — alone. Haven't you taken it up again — since?"

Neva merely shrugged; and more than ever he disliked that characteristic gesture — the subtly mocking yet easy-going tolerance of it. Exasperated, he exclaimed:

"It's not right! — to squander a gift God gave you! To squander your finer possibilities!"

Then she turned and looked at him; mockery and reproach, impatience and mute pleading, a little weariness and a tinge of wistfulness, all colored her gaze in a strange blend. She half put out a hand — let it fall.

"Don't let's talk about it," she said. "No use 'preaching' at me, if that's what you intend. No use — I haven't any 'finer possibilities'! I just follow the course of least resistance. It's the way I was born, I suppose — and the way I'll die."

"But you ought —— "

She shook her head, smiling.

"No, I oughtn't. I couldn't, anyway — not even if I wished to. As I told you, I'm just plain spineless. No backbone at all — it's really dreadful."

Bruce sensed the futility of argument; like the futility of pouring water on a duck's back. The trouble was with her spiritual attitude — that lethargic *laissez-faire* quality in her, a deplorable and heart-breaking quality, yet somehow by her very admission of it, by

her candid deprecation of it, somehow disarming and ingratiating. And it was as much a part of her as her brown eyes, as that flush which came and went on her cheek and that frivolous-tender curve of her mouth and that placid pose of her hands. He suddenly got a very full and definite sense of the girl who couldn't resist the telephone even though her aspirations went to pot — of that girl who couldn't say "no." And a sense, too, of the softly-hard, acquiescent woman who reigned in certain circles as the rich Mrs. Tom Shotter.

Driven by a feeling of resentful hurt, he would have expostulated further; but once more she interrupted him:

"Please don't — it's quite useless. Anyway, *I'm* content." She gave a little laugh. "We can't all of us be fine and exalted, you know. And it's not so bad just living for your little frittering good time — I read a verse about fireflies once; it was pretty, and I learned it by heart — listen." And she quoted:

*"The firefly, flickering about*
*In busy brightness near and far,*
*Lets not his little lamp go out*
*Because he cannot be a star —*
*He only seeks, the hour he lives,*
*Bravely his tiny part to play,*
*And all his being freely gives*
*To make a summer evening gay."*

She finished it with a mocking lilt in her voice. "Is that not a pretty verse?"

Bruce didn't answer. There were a dozen things he might have retorted. For example, that the tolerance with which she had accepted her husband's dishonor and now spending those tainted spoils on inconsequent vanities — he might have retorted that *this*, this drugging of the spirit, was scarcely analogous to a firefly's enjoyment of a summer evening. But he kept silent, so unhappy that he wondered why he was so unhappy.

All of a sudden Neva sprang to her feet, grasped his arm and pulled him up beside her.

"See — the sun's sinking! Right over the hills!"

Still holding his arm, she gazed at the spectacle of Glory in the west. Her eyes had gone soft, luminous, pensive. Indoors, Bruce could hear the grandfather's clock lazily ticking; the scent of the lilacs reached his very heart; the silence seemed long, yet crowded, portentous. He was afraid to move or speak.

IT was Neva who, at last, broke the hush. She spoke dreamily:

"I've always longed to live — sometime, somewhere — where I could see the sun set above the hills — just like this — —"

Involuntarily his hand reached for hers, still resting on his sleeve. They stood a long minute there, hands just touching, silent. Bruce didn't want to speak. Just then that sort of skyey wild rapture was sufficient — that amazed, trembling elation from the touch of her hand, from her presence there beside him.

But that night, as he lay wakeful, a sense of menace, a call for caution mounted in him. What was happening to him? Was he falling in love with the woman who had been Tom Shotter's wife? — was he allowing himself to do that? No, he mustn't let himself! She was alluring, but too soft, too supine — too "spineless," and too hard! He must get himself in hand. Best not to see her soon again — when she 'phoned about the next sitting, he'd put her off, till he should get himself in hand.

But Neva didn't 'phone. Three days passed and he didn't hear from her. Then, though he knew that she was not for him, though he had tried to reason himself out of wanting her, he found himself walking by the house in which she lived — had to do that, to give himself the sight of where she lived, at least.

In front of the house he saw a doctor's coupe, and the famous man just going in — he knew the famous Dr. Gorman by sight. Then, driven to inquiry, he himself rang the bell.

Coming down to the drawing-room, Neva told him it was not she who was ill, it was her maid. Poor Julie was terribly ill — this ghastly "flu"; and she, Neva, had been taking care of her — that was why she hadn't 'phoned.

"You mean you're nursing her yourself?" asked Bruce, astonished.

"Maybe I'm a better nurse than you think," laughing a little. Then, seriously: "There's not a good nurse to be had for love or money — it is a terrible epidemic, you know, and Julie's been with me for years — she's devoted to me and I to her — I'm so thankful to be able to help her. Dr. Gorman says we'll pull her through."

This new Neva, earnest, capable, unselfish, was a revelation to him.

"I've canceled all my engagements," she went on cheerfully. "I'm afraid I can't go on with the sittings for some time."

"Never mind about the sittings — but you! This thing's frightfully infectious — you'll probably be coming down yourself!"

"Oh, Dr. Gorman has me gargling and spraying till I tell him I spend more time on myself than on the patient!" Then, serious again: "But perhaps I shouldn't be exposing *you* — I hadn't thought of that."

Bruce scoffed at precautions for himself; if Neva could brave the sickroom surely he could brave Neva! And he made her promise that she would give him at least an hour a day — for a walk or drive in the fresh air — so he might know she was taking care of herself to that extent. (And also, though this was unexpressed, that he might feel he was having some share in taking care of her.)

Neva promised; and one of the sweetest, most satisfying periods of their relationship came about during those days Neva was giving up all her normal activities to tend her sick maid. Bruce all but forgot those normal activities — he wanted to forget them. He saw only this new Neva, serious and unselfish and sweet — he wanted only to see this new Neva. And that daily cherished hour seemed to bring her daily nearer to him; made her daily dearer to him.

One gloaming as they walked homeward through the park, after a long silence, she said:

"Strange how sort of contented you can be, just saying nothing, when you're with a person you like. That's real companionship, I suppose."

"Yes, that's companionship." Then suddenly, almost without knowing it, he had her hands in his, and scarcely premeditating his words: "Neva, would you be willing to try out that companionship — for life?"

For a breath she let her hands lie lax in his, gazed at him wide-eyed.

"I know it's presumptuous to ask you to marry me," he rushed on. "To ask you to give up so much for me who can give you so little. But," with a breathless little laugh, "I do ask you!"

For a second longer she let her hands lie in his, then withdrew them slowly, gently.

"Oh, Bruce," with a catch in her voice, "why did you spoil everything?"

"Spoil everything?" his voice slowing, deadening.

"Yes, it's been so wonderful, being with you — I've grown so fond of you — but ——"

"But not fond enough of me to marry me. I understand," grimly.

"Oh, Bruce!" she lamented again, and her hand sought his convulsively, pleadingly. "You make it so hard for me — you put me in the wrong! I *am* in the wrong — I know I'm not much good. I know how shallow it is to love ease and luxury and extravagance. But I *do* love them — I can't bear to give them up."

She had turned white enough, yet she could balance her desires like that! He said nothing. And she went on, in that lamenting, beseeching tone:

"But I'm fond of you, too — so awfully, awfully fond of you. If I could only have both!" Then, as he was still silent: "Do you despise me, Bruce?"

"I don't know," he answered dully.

And in truth, just then, he didn't know. For, just then, he had a horrible and sickish feeling that he could have her — without marriage! No loss of fortune to her in that, and she admitted she cared for him and she was the girl who couldn't say "no"!

He felt sick — sick — sick. But he realized, at last, how in some secret corner of his heart he had let Neva Shotter entwine herself with the pulsing dawn, with the trembling white stars of night — had let her attune herself to the beat of the whole universe. Now, when she had proved herself unworthy, when he had lost her — it was now, by these tokens, he knew how much he loved her. And, though he told himself his despair was occasioned by her unworthiness, in his heart of hearts he knew it was because he had lost her. Lost her because between him and this woman it must be everything or nothing.

All the future, all life, seemed shattered.

Bruce went up to the old house in the Connecticut hills, and there it seemed to him he suffered till his capacity for pain was exhausted. For a time the hunger for her, that woman who had married Tom Shotter and would not marry Bruce Hewitt, gnawed his being. But Bruce was a strong fighter, and he fought for vanity, for freedom to live and paint and forget. After a few months there in the isolated quiet, he packed his traps and went to Europe. And gradually, during his four year of exile — four years of Paris and Rome and Spain, of vicissitudes, work and play, zeal and discouragements and the exaltation of growing success — gradually his thought of Neva softened, dimmed. She became a soft, frail shadow, a wan ghost of someone who might have been. But there was something too pitiful about that wraith-like figure, and something too faraway about the whole retrospect, to admit of rancor — to admit of anything but vague regrets and tenderness.

He counted that old tumultuous dream in all its pain and sweetness as dead; dead and done for, and life was a straight road for ambition and Art — and a wife, when he "got around to it." He had become greatly successful as an artist and, for an artist, successful in the market place. But his gains would be as nothing if it came to furnishing luxuries to a Neva Shotter. No, they would only make a home for a real wife — when he found her. He was not very successful in interesting himself in the women he met.

When he returned to New York after his four years' absence, fate had it that he should again encounter Neva Shotter. He met her by chance on the avenue, and thought she was glad to see him. Gladness showed in her quick palpitating color, and eyes so shining tender; she did not look like — the worldly woman that, of course, she was. But then she had always seemed other than she was, and she had never cared for him even though she said she did; and so, since the ghost of his love was laid, why not have the amusement of knowing her again? He promised to go to see her.

Neva had drifted into a different *milieu*, and he could not decide whether she had altered her lot for the better or worse. For her circle, though no longer crudely "common," was now so artificial it made forthright commonness seem almost a virtue. Suave, slick and "smart," it lived dazzlingly on the fringe of the fashionable world; hard as steel, polished as steel, more scintillating than steel, but with none of steel's stern intrinsic fibre. To Bruce Hewitt, from his more sober viewpoint, they seemed like sleek, shallow, self-engrossed puppets in some extravagant musical comedy, skimming about under blazing electroliers and unaware of — not caring to be aware of — the backdrop of human realities which loomed behind them. With a sort of sublime complacence skimming through the meretricious dazzle — life to them only a froth of pleasure and the things that money can buy.

HE was fair enough to know that he had no just ground for condemning these gay worldlings, Neva's new intimates; individuals properly decide their way of life for themselves. However, when it came to Neva, he found himself not being so broad-minded, impersonal. And it bothered him not a little to find he could still be so bothered by her.

Young, attractive, alone — and rich; easy to see how these suave skimmers would see in her a desirable companion for their skimming. And Neva, with her frivolous strain and that easy-going laxity of character — the girl who could never say "no." . . .

But she was more beautiful than ever — with that same wistful appeal, still curiously compounded with that show of amused tolerance and sophistication. More than ever she seemed at once too soft and too hard. But the veneer of hardness had thickened; that imprint of a frittering worldliness which always leaves its stamp.

At first Bruce let her draw him, a little, into her routine, her activities. Rather rashly he tried mingling with her friends, meeting her on her own ground — her chosen ground. But he had a feeling of unease, a sense of not "fitting in," of boredom and irritation; and, finally, an increasing sense of unhappiness.

It was the unhappiness which alarmed him, which determined him to flee. He hadn't dreamed that Neva Shotter still possessed that much power over him — the power to sadden him, to hurt him with the cheerful display of her spirit's deterioration. Yes, and the power to make him crave her society even though it did hurt!

So he took to making excuses when she invited him to join her festivities. Once he remained aloof a whole week before he eventually succumbed to her reproaches over the telephone. Then another week went by in one long effort to be with her and not appear as if he greatly wished to be — one long effort not to reveal that secret and increasing pain. A week of uncertainty, everything in turmoil but vague; then fleeing again, feeling himself a coward, despicable, yet desperately miserable; always that ache feeding on secrecy and loneliness — at war with himself, but everything still vague and uncertain — wondering what the end would be, *could* be!

The first upshot was that it was he, this time, who telephoned. And then he went to see her. It was late afternoon, the shadowed side street bringing on an early dusk. She was alone, and at the first sight of her his heart gave a sort of plunge and flight as if all its vague and aching sensations had found their goal.

"Why do you avoid me, Bruce?" she greeted him unexpectedly.

"Avoid you?" he asked back, irresolutely. "Have you been discovering that I avoid you?" It was as if he said it to himself more than to her. From the turmoil within him he seemed to hear a voice which told him that if she knew this she knew what his avoidance signified.

"I feel that you do — you know that you do. Why is it, Bruce?"

He didn't speak but, rising from his seat beside her — afraid to trust himself near her — he began walking up and down; to get away from the lure of those shining, troubled eyes. But they followed him with their gaze — though he did not look he could feel them following him. Finally a little piteously, she spoke again.

"I was so glad to meet you again — I counted on our being friends. I've always wanted you for my friend — always."

"There seems always to have been obstacles," he replied dully, scarcely aware of the words he uttered. He moved toward a lamp, switched on the light. But Neva swiftly came and turned it off.

"No, it's nicer like this — I can talk better without the light."

She stood there close beside him — close again! The shadowy room, the pale dusk glimmering through the windows, and her white face, those questioning, troubled, mesmeric eyes shining there — so close!

And her voice, troubled, too, and questioning:

"What are the obstacles, Bruce?"

NOW was the time to be outspoken, to pour out all those doubts which, reborn torturesomely out of the buried past, had been clogging his brain, his whole being. Now was the time to speak out, with no reservation, once and for all; but he had not the clearness of mind — no, nor the courage.

"What are the obstacles?" she insisted, putting her hand on his arm. Heavens! — what was her power? — it was witchlike! Just that faint pressure of her hand through his sleeve to set his blood on fire. She was proceeding, persisting: "You mean — my other friends? You don't care for them?"

"You know I'm not at home with them," he blurted out miserably.

Neva, as if rebuked, removed her hand and moved away toward the window. She stood there looking out, blurred against the wan light.

"Of course, I know how you feel about those things," she said presently —"living mostly just for a good time, just sort of frittering yourself away in pleasure. And I admire you for it — I do really, Bruce. Sometimes I get terribly bored with my existence myself — get a sense of what a useless thing I really am. And demoralized, too: every now and then something brings me up sharp to realize how little principle I've got, how the little I *have* got has let itself get layered over with — things. Not that I've tried to escape it all," she added honestly. "I haven't. Only beneath everything, now and then, I've had a feeling that I was missing something — I don't know exactly what — but something I wanted, needed, oh, very much. And down under that top happiness I'd be unhappy."

She was standing very still there by the window, gazing out, the mauvish half-light touching her as with gentle pity; pity for that bent head, that soft-curved cheek, that drooping mouth.

"And I've always remembered that day up in the hills," she continued — "the lilacs, the ticking clock, the sunset over the hills. How wonderful . . . just to listen and look; not to be bothered by — things. Things — bothers — all far away."

Then, scarcely knowing what he was doing, what he intended to do, Bruce found himself beside her, stood close beside her, looking down at her. She lifted her eyes, the interrogation in them deepening; then, as they met his, they altered, at once more clouded and more luminous — starlight and dew! — and her breathing quickened; she half raised a hand. And then his arms went round her, crushed her, a soft, warm, quivering bundle; and his mouth found her mouth. And suddenly, in that moment, vanished all the doubts and torments of those past weeks. Such is the magic when your lips feel what they have hungered and thirsted for; such is the magic of that electricity which two can make for each other; an electric tumult which transcends definition, explanation or reason — and which stultifies reason. For a blessed space Bruce's rational processes forgot to function.

Then, at last, brokenly:

"Neva, you're not going to turn me down again — you can't turn me down — *now.*"

And with a little catching laugh, partly rueful but with more contentment than ruefulness, she answered: "No, it seems I can't turn you down."

"And are you happy?" he demanded.

She nestled closer. "Yes — I'm happy."

"And always will be happy?"

There was a slight pause, so slight as to be almost imperceptible before she repeated: "And always will be happy. Oh, Bruce!" and her voice lifted and caught on a new wave of feeling. "Oh, Bruce, it hurt too much, too much when you left me before. And I care more now."

But, during that less-than-ghost of hesitation, Bruce seemed to hear a knock of menace deep down in his heart. Brusquely, almost peremptorily, he demanded further: "And you'll never regret the money — and things?"

She stirred with the barest trace of impatience. "Let's not talk about that now; let's be happy — just be happy."

It was as if, in her happiness, she was hushing down some whisper in her consciousness; as if she wanted to take this hour, and forget that there was any future. And Bruce, holding her in his arms, got a sense of this; heard again that knock of menace. But he held her in his arms — so sweet just to hold her in his arms!

So he became engaged to Neva Shotter. It was sweet to hold her in his arms; but the time that followed was a bitter-sweet time. He alternated between hope and fear; she said she loved him; had promised to marry him, yet had made no definite terms about that — kept expertly avoiding making them. She was devoted, but a little inscrutable. There was the seemingly trivial instance of a costume dance. Neva wanted to go — had promised to take part in some kind of pageant — and she wanted Bruce to go, too.

"Why do you want me to go? — you know I'd only feel uncomfortable and out of place?"

And then she retorted:

"I suppose you'd rather make me feel miserable than feel miserable yourself!"

"Do you honestly mean, Neva, that the going or not going to this dance has the power to make you feel miserable or not miserable?"

Her manner changed; in an instant she was all tenderness; with her arms round his neck she said, if he didn't want to go, then she wouldn't go. But he was conscious that she was "giving in." And he wondered, forebodingly, whether life for them was to be a series of "givings in"? Endless compromises on her part or on his — the two of them, in their hearts, never desiring the same thing. No chance for happiness that way, for any enduring happiness — no chance at all.

He felt scared; more than once, out of some episode as trivial as that of the costume dance, he would find himself feeling scared. And he divined on Neva's part, too, at times, a secret and scared weighing of the balance.

In matters of difference she would always, eventually, "give in," but despite her giving in — because of it — his own secret alarms would increase. And all the while, under those rushes of loving warmth, he would get that compelling sense of something hidden and contemplative in her; it was as if she were striving, with that tenderness, to cover up those furtive speculations.

Meanwhile his work was going to pot. He couldn't settle down to it and, when he chained himself by his will to his paint and brushes, what he did was no good. Would he ever do good work again? — how much was his marriage, even when he did marry Neva, going to allay these gnawings of suspense and dread? Even when he did marry her!

When? Neva was never ready to set the wedding date — never "just yet." And, though he knew she wanted him, he suspected her of wanting all her careless, widespread luxury, too — of wanting to hold on to it, each month, for just a month longer.

At last, driven desperate by a long stretch of effort at work with no achievement, he resolved to put an end, one way or the other, to this mounting torture. Better to relinquish bliss altogether than to hug a "bliss that gnaws the heart."

He did not so much make it as he found that definite resolve in his breast; it had made itself, and he rushed from his studio and went straight to her. When she first entered the drawing-room where he sat taut on a small, brocaded chair, she cried out:

"Bruce! — what's the matter?"

"What's the matter? — everything's the matter." He jumped up and began striding the length of the room. "I can't eat — can't sleep. That doesn't matter much, but I can't work — that matters. You're ruining my work — ruining me!"

"I'm ruining you?" The question fell mechanically. She stood motionless, at first, gazing at him; seemed, at first, petrified by his violence.

"Yes, you're ruining me! I can't stand it any longer — won't stand it any longer. You keep putting me off — putting me off with soft words and kisses. God knows what's in your mind! But I'm going to find out what's in your mind. It's come to a showdown."

"To a showdown?" her voice, repeating, still lifeless, mechanical.

"Yes. You'll either come with me — now — to the City Hall, or wherever they go, and marry me — now — else we'll call it off — now."

"There seems to be a great insistence on the 'now'," she said with a forced little laugh; that first stunned lifelessness was leaving her.

"There is. I'm sick of being played with — you're destroying me."

"Well, if I'm destroying you, do you think you're very wise taking me to the City Hall — or wherever they go?" There was a bright light in her eyes and a flag of red in her cheeks. But Bruce either didn't see, else chose not to heed, these omens of growing anger. He continued his restless pacing, not answering. She stood in her place, regarding him. Finally he came to a halt before her.

"Well?"

"If you mean whether I'm accepting your polite invitation to go to the City Hall — I'm not."

Then, after a brief hush: "Why should I be surprised?" His eyes flew in contemptuous appraisal round the room, its rich furnishings. "You certainly haven't given much indication that you preferred me — to *this*," with a brusque gesture.

"Haven't you yet finished expressing your opinion of me?"

HER voice was still quiet — dangerously quiet. For a space their eyes met, mutely challenging. It was as if each, torn by suffering, were trying to make the other suffer. Seeking words which would pierce and smart. Maddening each other and wanting to madden the other. Neva broke a silence:

"Well, you've convinced me that I'm no good. I never pretended to be much good anyway — you have to admit that. But of course, since you put the matter so plainly, I can't deliberately make myself responsible for your 'destruction' —— "

"You're catching me up on my words! — you're evading the issue!" he cut in hotly. "If you were sincere — wanted to be sincere —— "

But she interrupted him with a weary gesture.

"Maybe I'm not — you seem to know better than I. But, anyway, I'm not evading the issue: I can't trust myself to lead your life — I am too worthless."

Then her eyes flashed again and her voice rose, suddenly impassioned:

"Now, will you please go? Since you've had the 'showdown' you wished, will you please go — at once — and never come back?"

And Bruce, catching up his hat, flung out of the room and out of the house.

A second time, because of Neva Shotter, he fled from New York and to the sanctuary of his old home in the hills; tried, there, to recapture something of peace, some possibility of work. Though it was a harder fight than the first time, he was a grimmer fighter; the years had nerved him to writhe less under suffering; he suffered enough, but he worked too, painting with force enough. He felt he would win out again, and this time he would throttle the enemy in his breast to death — even though he must forever go scarred from the battle.

He learned, a month or so after he had fled New York, that he must return briefly to the dreaded place. He shrank from the thought as if from a second searing of a branding-iron. But it was necessary to go. The Art Museum was proposing to buy one of his landscapes — that was something which could not be ignored.

He was to meet one of the curators at the Museum. He was in front of the building, hurrying to keep the appointment, when there, coming down the steps — there was Neva Shotter! Dazed, torn, driven by an instinct to flee, he stepped backward and before an oncoming motor.

He didn't lose consciousness immediately; vaguely felt himself, his whole being, become one benumbed mass of consuming pain — and his eyes — something

queer about his eyes. And through his cloud of torment he was dimly aware of Neva, of Neva speaking to this person and that, her voice quiet and authoritative and capable — she seemed to be giving orders. Then she was sitting beside him in a motor, her shoulder supporting his head — his head against Neva's shoulder!

He tried to speak; but she gently hushed him.

"Don't try to talk now, dear. Presently you can talk. Just keep quiet now — try to rest."

Obediently he closed his eyes, let himself relax against her shoulder. One part of him seemed floating — floating with his head on Neva's shoulder — but, oh, the heavy tormented body of him was in a car that was jolting him to death.

Floating — jolting — they finally arrived somewhere where men came and carried him up some steps and into a building. Again he heard Neva talking, her voice quiet and authoritative and capable. His ears caught two arresting words — "*my fiancé*" . . . And then he fainted.

That was what filled his mind when he came back to consciousness: why had she claimed him — why had she told that lie? After he had been examined and bandaged and anesthetics no longer put too strange a pain-shot unreality over everything, the first wholly coherent words he spoke were to Neva. When through the mist of atropine in his eyes he saw her beside him, oblivious of the white-uniformed nurse who stood there too, he asked:

"Why did you tell that lie?"

Neva turned and said something to the nurse in an undertone; they spoke together in undertones for a moment, and then the nurse left the room.

Neva came and sat beside him; he couldn't see her clearly — what was the matter with his eyes?

"The nurse has given me just a minute," she said. "Oh, Bruce, I know you despise me — but I had to be able to come to you. That's why I said what I did. I *had* to, Bruce! — I'll say anything you want me to, later."

"I don't — despise you. That's not why I asked."

Their hands met and clasped.

"Funny you happened to be there," he said presently. "How did you happen to be just there?"

When she answered there was a strange note, half-embarrassment and half-pride, in her voice:

"I've been haunting the Museum, Bruce. It seemed to bring me nearer you. I've hurt so that I didn't know how to go on with the days. And yet it was true, Bruce — what I told you; only I could not say it till I got angry — I made myself get angry. I knew, too, I was injuring you. And I could not trust myself to be fine and right — I knew how weak I am. But maybe I could grow a little!" She falteringly continued: "I thought maybe I could get to know something about pictures — to care for the things *you* care for. I didn't want to go on being always despicable even if you would go on always despising me."

"I don't despise you," he said again. And again their hands clasped.

Then he asked about himself — how much he was injured. And with the loving prevarications with which tender hearts seek to "ease down" the stricken, she told him the injuries were not serious. The trouble with his eyes was sympathetic, but though nothing was serious everything together was serious enough for her to want to stay near him. The doctors and nurses had said she might come daily. Did he mind if she came daily?

No, Bruce didn't mind!

She did come daily, and those days, Bruce saw again the sweet, devoted, self-forgetful woman he had seen nursing her sick maid — and then had never seen again. And at last Neva was sure of herself; she tried to convince him of that when he had to learn the truth about his injuries. He might never regain the full sight of his eyes — likely would never be able to paint again!

"Oh, Bruce darling," implored Neva, in an agony of pleading, "don't send me away! — don't make me leave you — not ever! Don't be afraid I'll ever fail you — I won't. Because you need me! — because I need you! I always need you most, Bruce, but I couldn't count on myself when it was I who needed you, but now — try me, dear."

FOUR years had passed since Neva Shotter, according to the verdict of her old set, had "played the fool". Marrying any man with less money than she must lose looked so insane to them that the details of her union with a poor painter, who had besides just got himself smashed up in a motor accident, hardly interested them.

They knew she went away with him to see some august European medical authorities; they hoped she'd stay "over there"; if you had to live on next-to-nothing a year that was the way to do it — and then it was so much better to drop out utterly into the void than to be hanging around New York where people knew you! What they really meant was that it was pleasanter for them than having an acquaintance in "changed circumstances" at hand, where they might have to turn a cold shoulder or else be bothered knowing her.

There was word of Bruce now and again in the New York as well as in the Paris papers; he was an artist whose fate and movements commanded that attention, but Neva's old friends took no more account of "art notes" than of church news.

It was four years after that preposterous, incredible hospital wedding when, one spring day, two of Neva's one-time friends, motoring to somewhere from somewhere else, chanced on a pretty by-road that brought them into an unfamiliar, drowsy village where a quaint swinging sign announced "The Cherry Tree Inn." They, and their car, and their chauffeur were as smart as money and style could make them, but they condescended to find charm in the gnarled cherry tree and the old colonial house which even as an inn kept its benignant air of hospitality. The May weather, too, the soft breeze, those scented lilacs and that vista of hills — altogether the ladies decided to take time for tea.

The mistress of the place came in to see that the ittle maid had properly served them, a gingham-frocked, practical, lovely, young mistress — and — yes, it was Neva, Neva Shotter! — what was that painter's name? — they rubbed it out of the dust-heaps of their memories just as Neva, recognizing them, and with that old-time amused little flicker in her eyes, was coming to greet them.

They met her with effusion; now that they remembered her they had arrears of curiosity to bring up. Neva was the same friendly, detached Neva they had known of old, the same to them, though even their complacency was bothered by some new ease — contentment — something that was impossible, yet *was* there, to baffle them.

Neva told about herself as if she read their curiosity and felt merciful toward it. Her husband's eyes had been injured in that accident before they were married — perhaps her visitors might remember about the motor accident which had brought her to a hospital

wedding? — and that sunny, ironic gleam in her eyes was all that told how she knew she was recalling to them a history which in their eyes was scarcely less than a scandal. He had recovered perfectly — all but the eyes — and his paintings had risen in value when it was thought he could paint no more. But she was determined that he should have the best help in the world, and all there was of it, to put him where he could paint again. She had learned in Europe wonderful things from great people about what a genius she had married. "And I owed him so much," she added in an abstracted momentary forgetfulness of her audience. But the old flicker of amusement rose in the brown eyes at the bewilderment she caught on their faces. She did not explain what she owed, but went on to tell how, after his pictures were nearly all sold, the greatest oculist in the world had said that time and quiet without worry would restore him. And then she had seen the possibilities of this old house; and it had been a success, her little inn, and she was almost as proud of helping to "carry on" as she was of being married to a great man.

Her visitors got themselves away with effusive praises and good wishes which did not quite cover up their relief at getting away — they did not know how to talk to this absurd creature; with this upsetting, soft radiance of hers making her look so young, in her little gingham frock, she threw such a strange light on life they wanted for their comfort to get away, and forget her, and go back to talking their own language.

And Neva sped their going for, before the busy dinner-hour, she always ran up to a big second-story room with windows facing the sinking sun and where she would find her husband awaiting her.

This time she had the news of her visitors to tell him.

"And you were not homesick?" asked Bruce, but lightly, humorously; Neva had had it hard—he had suffered in his impotence! — but she had tasted realities and found love the greatest of them all; she had truly lived, both in her love and in her pain for him — and too, in all the rich, stimulating interests and people that he, for all his afflictions, could bring to her. But above all in Love. And he knew she had never regretted the dreary, shiny, whirligig cage which prisoned those women.

"Oh, I felt so sorry for them," was his wife's only answer to that — "never to be alive at all."

They reached hands to each other and sat silent. But at last Neva spoke again.

"I love you," she said with tender matter-of-factness, "and you love me, and of course that's the best of everything. But it's sweet to have had so much else from you. You have given me the soul I couldn't get for myself."

"And you have given it to me — the most beautiful —" Bruce Hewitt began; but his voice died on things inexpressible. The poor visitors speeding away from them, and from the disturbing memory of them, had served to bring to them one of those perfect moments of communion that even such time-tried, storm-weathering lovers can know but rarely.

"But in chaste hearts uninfluenced by the power
of outward change
There blooms a deathless flower that breathes
on earth the air of Paradise."

The immortal verses were in Bruce's mind, but the sun hung on the hills, and the perfume of lilacs drifted in, and this woman was with him, and silence was better than even Michelangelo's loveliest words.

# The Young Trader

*by*

## Jean Kenyon Mackenzie

All day beneath the store-house thatch
He trafficked in the spoil
And weighed the plunder of the bush.
The ivory and the oil;

But when night fell upon the flame
Of burning tropic day
And you might see the evil land
Beneath the moon at play,

Then Allan would come up the road
In linen frayed and white
To knock upon a fellow's door
And sit with him the night,

To crack his homely country jokes,
To rise at last and say,
"I must be getting down the road!"
Oh, Allan, won't you stay?

Young Allan died; he was the first
Of three I watched beside.
I sat and thought of youth and death
The night young Allan died.

His little day upon the beach —
How long, long passed away!
And still I hear his country speech
And still I hear him say —

"I must be getting down the road!"
Oh, Allan, must you so?
How light you are of any load,
How quick you are to go!

# The Breaking Point*

## By Mary Roberts Rinehart

### Illustrated by T. D. Skidmore

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS—

"I'D like to go back to the ranch at Norada to clear up things, to fill in the gap in my memory and find out whether I'm a free man, before I ask Elizabeth's father for his consent to our marriage." Young Doctor Dick Livingstone was talking to Doctor David Livingstone, whom he knew as his uncle. The latter showed a dogged obstinacy and irritability that were oddly like fear. "You let well enough alone, Dick. There's no reason why you should not marry."

Lucy Crosby, David's widowed sister, who presided over his household, had mothered Dick from the time, when, as a lad of twenty-two, David had brought him East to his home in the tree-shaded suburb of Haverly and sent him to medical college. She had always deplored David's course in the shaping of the boy's life and had warned him that some day Dick would have to be told.

Dick had taken Elizabeth Wheeler to see Beverly Carlysle in "The Valley." The actress' brother, Gregory, who happened to be standing at the rear of the theater with Bassett, a reporter, discovering Dick in the audience, behaved as if he had seen a ghost. Bassett learned later that Gregory believed Dick to be Judson Clark! The name brought back to Bassett the memory of a notorious murder case of ten years before: Clark, the reckless young millionaire, whom Beverly Carlysle, the actress, rejected for Howard Lucas; the murder of Lucas at Clark's ranch in Norada, Wyoming; Clark's escape and the general acceptance of his death in a mountain storm.

Bassett's sympathies were with "Clark" in spite of the "big story," and he was seriously considering whether he ought to drop the whole thing when a newspaper's headlines the next morning started him toward Wyoming. "Is Judson Clark Alive? Wife of former range manager makes confession!" Maggie Donaldson on her death bed confessed that she and her husband and a stranger had cared for Jud Clark, who was ill from exposure, in a mountain cabin near Norada, immediately following the murder of Lucas. She had died leaving her confession unfinished.

The search for Clark was on again with scores of reporters heading for Norada, among them Bassett. From the moment of his arrival the latter was amazed at the ease with which he linked up all his evidence to prove beyond doubt that he had found Judson Clark.

Following a visit from Gregory, Dr. David collapsed from a stroke. Dick knew that his illness was due to some great shock, and he had a shrewd suspicion that it had to do with himself, especially since Clare Rossiter, a young girl who had secretly admired him greatly, but to whom he had paid scant attention, through pique at his indifference to her charms had foolishly gone to the old Doctor with some unsavory gossip that was being whispered about his parentage.

His suspicions were confirmed by the receipt of a mysterious telegram addressed to Doctor David which Dick withheld from him. The telegram warned David that Bassett was on the trail and advised that "the person" be gotten out of the way. It was signed "G."

Dick went quietly to Norada where he encountered Bassett. Bassett was about to offer his help when Dick became seriously ill, soon lapsing into unconsciousness. Leaving him in the care of a chambermaid, Hattie Thorwald, Bassett went in search of a doctor and on returning found the sheriff (who had learned that some one resembling Clark was in the hotel) in charge, and Dick gone. On a tip from the chambermaid Bassett followed, overtaking him in the hills, but all remembrance of his identity as Dr. Richard Livingstone was gone. He believed himself to be Jud Clark, fleeing from the scene of a murder committed the night before. With some difficulty Bassett won his confidence and convinced him that all he remembered happened ten years ago. But while his reason was convinced it was impossible for Dick, or Jud as he now was in fact, to realize conditions. They camped that night far in the hills and while Bassett slept, Dick, leaving a note for him, mounted his horse and rode away. His return to the identity of Jud Clark was complete, even to an inordinate craving for liquor and his blind love for Beverly Carlysle. Gradually, however, the craving for drink wore away, and after an interview with Beverly in New York, he found the old love dead and only a sincere friendship left. Elizabeth, meantime, discouraged and numb with sorrow had engaged herself to a young man of the town who had long been a suitor. Bassett set himself more determinedly than ever to straighten things out, and as a result of his investigations and an analysis of the evidence given at the coroner's inquest he became firmly convinced that Clark did not commit the murder and that if he can find Melis, who was Judson's valet at that time, he will be able to clear the matter up.

Elizabeth's sister, Nina, discovered that her husband, Leslie Ward, is in love with Beverly Carlsyle and the fact, together with Leslie's jealousy of Dick, caused further complications that have far reaching consequences for Elizabeth, though Nina and Leslie, in spite of strained relations, managed to live together comfortably enough.

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NINA and Leslie each had their reservations, but especially after Jim's death they tacitly agreed to stop bickering, and to make their mutual concessions. What Nina never suspected was that he corresponded with Beverly Carlysle. Not that the correspondence amounted to much. He had sent her flowers the night of the New York opening, with the name of his club on his card, and she wrote there in acknowledgment. Then, later, twice he sent her books, one a biography, which was a compromise with his conscience, and later a volume of exotic love verse, which was not. As he replied to her notes of thanks a desultory correspondence had sprung up, letters which the world might have read, and yet which had to him the savor and interest of the clandestine.

He did not know that that, and not infatuation, was behind his desire to see Beverly again; never reasoned that he was demonstrating to himself that his adventurous love life was not necessarily ended; never acknowledged that that instinct of the hunter was as alive in him as in the days before his marriage. Partly, then, a desire for adventure, partly a hope that romance was not over but might still be waiting around the next corner, was behind his desire to see her again.

Probably Nina knew that, as she knew so many things; why he had taken to reading poetry, for instance. Certain it is that when he began, early in October, to throw out small tentative remarks about the necessity of a business trip before long to New York, she narrowed her eyes. She was determined to go with him, if he went at all, and he was equally determined that she should not.

It became, in a way, a sort of watchful waiting on both sides.

Then there came a time when some slight excuse offered, and Leslie took up the shuttle for forty-eight hours, and wove his bit in the pattern. It happened to be on the same evening as Dick's return to the old

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house. He was a little too confident, a trifle too easy to Nina.

"Has the handle of my suitcase been repaired yet?" he asked. He was lighting a cigarette at the time.

"Yes. Why?"

"I'll have to run over to New York tomorrow. I wanted Joe to go alone, but he thinks he needs me." Joe was his partner.

"Oh! So Joe's going?"

"That's what I said."

She was silent. Joe's going was clever of him. It gave authenticity to his business, and it kept her at home.

"How long shall you be gone?"

"Only a day or two." He could not entirely keep the relief out of his voice. It had been easy, incredibly easy. He might have done it a month ago. And he had told the truth; Joe was going.

"I'll pack tonight and take my suitcase in with me in the morning."

"If you'll get your things out I'll pack them." She was still thinking, but her tone was indifferent. "You won't want your dress clothes, of course?"

"I'd better have a dinner suit."

She looked at him then with a half contemptuous smile.

"Yes," she said slowly. "I suppose you will. You'll be going to the theater."

He glanced away.

"Possibly. But we'll be rushing to get through. There's a lot to do. Amazing how business piles up when you find you're going anywhere. There won't be much time to play."

She sat before the mirror in her small dressing room that night, ostensibly preparing for bed but actually taking stock of her situation. She had done all she could, had been faithful and loyal, had made his home attractive, had catered to his tastes and tried to like his friends, had met his needs and responded to them. And now this. She was bewildered and frightened. How did women hold their husbands?

She found him in bed and unmistakably asleep when she went into the bedroom. Manlike, having got his way, he was not troubled by doubts or introspection. It was done.

He was lying on his back, with his mouth open. She felt a sudden and violent repugnance to getting into the bed beside him. Some time in the night he would turn over and, throwing his arm about her, hold her close in his sleep; and it would be purely automatic, the mechanical result of habit.

She lay on the edge of the bed and thought things over. He had his good qualities. He was kind and affectionate to her family. He had been wonderful when Jim died, and he loved Elizabeth dearly. He was generous and open handed. He was handsome, too, in a big, heavy way.

She began to find excuses for him. Men were always a childlike prey to some women. They were vain, and especially they were sex vain; good looking men were a target for every sort of advance. She transferred her loathing of him to the woman she suspected of luring him away from her, and lay for hours hating her.

She saw Leslie off in the morning with a perfunctory good-bye while cold anger and suspicion seethed in her. And later on she put on her hat and went home to lay the situation before her mother. Mrs. Wheeler was out, however, and she found only Elizabeth sewing by her window.

Nina threw her hat on the bed, and sat down dispiritedly.

"I suppose there's no news?" she asked.

"No."

Nina watched her. She was out of patience with Elizabeth, exasperated with the world.

"Are you going to go on like this all your life?" she demanded. "Sitting by a window, waiting? For a man who ran away from you?"

"That's not true, and you know it."

"They're all alike," Nina declared recklessly. "They go along well enough, and they are all for virtue and for the home and fireside stuff, until some woman comes their way. I ought to know."

Elizabeth looked up quickly.

"Why, Nina!" she said. "You don't mean —"

"He went to New York this morning. He pretended to be going on business, but he's actually gone to see that actress. He's been mad about her for months."

"I don't believe it."

"Oh, wake up," Nina said impatiently. "The world isn't made up of good, kind, virtuous people. It's rotten. And men are all alike. Dick Livingstone and Les and the rest — tarred with the same stick. As long as there are women like this Carlysle creature they'll fall for them. And you and I can sit at home and chew our nails, and plan to keep them by us. And we can't do it."

In spite of herself, a little question of doubt crept that day into Elizabeth's mind. She had always known that they had not told her all the truth, that the benevolent conspiracy to protect Dick extended even to her. But she had never thought that it might include a woman. Once there, the very humility of her love for Dick was an element in favor of the idea. She had never been good enough, or wise or clever enough, for him. She was too small and unimportant to be really vital.

Dismissing the thought did no good. It came back. But because she was a healthy minded and practical person she took the one course she could think of, and put the question that night to her father, when he came back from seeing David. David had sent for him early in the evening.

All day David had thought over the situation between Dick and Elizabeth, with growing pain and uneasiness.

He had not spoken of it Lucy or to Harrison Miller; he knew that they would not understand, and that Lucy would suffer. She was bewildered enough by Dick's departure.

At noon he had insisted on getting up, and being helped into his trousers. So clad, he felt more of a man and better able to cope with things, although his satisfaction in them was somewhat modified by the knowledge of two safety-pins at the sides, to take up their superfluous girth at the waist band.

But even the sense of being clothed as a man again did not make it easier to say to Walter Wheeler what must be said.

Walter took the news of Dick's return with a visible brightening. It was as though, out of the wreckage of his middle years, he saw that there was now some salvage, but he was grave and inarticulate over it, wrung David's hand and only said:

"Thank God for it, David." And after a pause: "Was he all right? He remembered everything?"

"Yes."

But something strange in the situation began to obtrude itself in his mind. Dick had come back twenty-four hours ago. Last night. And all this time —

"Where is he now?"

"He's not here, Walter."

"He has gone away again, without seeing Elizabeth?"

David cleared his throat.

"He is still a fugitive. He doesn't himself know he isn't guilty. I think he feels that he ought not to see her until —"

"Come, come," Walter Wheeler said impatiently. "Don't try to find excuses for him. Let's have the truth, David. I guess I can stand it."

Poor David, divided between his love for Dick and his native honesty, threw out his hands.

"I don't understand it, Wheeler," he said. "You and I wouldn't, I suppose. We are not the sort to lose the world for a woman. The plain truth is that there is not a trace of Judson Clark in him today, save one. That's the woman."

When Wheeler said nothing, but sat twisting his hat in his hands, David went on. It might be only a phase. As its impression on Dick's youth had been deeper than others, so its effect was more lasting. It might gradually disappear. He was confident, indeed, that it would. He had been reading on the subject all day.

Walter Wheeler hardly heard him. He was facing the incredible fact, and struggling with his own problem. After a time he got up, shook hands with David and went home, the dog at his heels.

During the evening that followed he made his resolution, not to tell her, never to let her suspect the truth. But he began to wonder if she had heard something, for he found her eyes on him more than once, and when Margaret had gone up to bed she came over and sat on the arm of his chair. She said an odd thing then, and one that made it impossible to lie to her later.

"I come to you, a good bit as I would go to God, if he were a person," she said. "I have got to know something, and you can tell me."

He put his arm around her and held her close.

"Go ahead, honey."

"Daddy, do you realize that I am a woman now?"

"I try to. But it seems about six months since I was feeding you hot water for colic."

She sat still for a moment, stroking his hair and being very careful not to spoil his neat parting.

"You have never told me all about Dick, daddy. You have always kept something back. That's true, isn't it?"

"There were details," he said uncomfortably. "It wasn't necessary —"

"Here's what I want to know. If he has gone back to the time — you know. Wouldn't he go back to caring for the people he loved then?" Then, suddenly, her childish appeal ceased, and she slid from the chair and stood before him. "I must know, father. I can bear it. The thing you have been keeping from me was another woman, wasn't it?"

"It was so long ago," he temporized. "Think of it, Elizabeth. A boy of twenty-one or so."

"Then there was?"

"I believe so, at one time. But I know positively that he hadn't seen or heard from her in ten years."

"What sort of woman?"

"I wouldn't think about it, honey. It's all so long ago."

"Did she live in Wyoming?"

"She was an actress," he said, hard driven by her persistence.

"Do you know her name?"

"No, honey."

"But you know she was an actress!"

He sighed.

"All right, dear," he said. "I'll tell you all I know. She was an actress, and she married another man. That's all there is to it. She's not young now. She must be thirty odd — if she's living," he added, as an afterthought.

It was some time before she spoke again.

"I suppose she was beautiful?" she said slowly.

"I don't know. Most of them aren't, off the stage. Anyhow, what does it matter now?"

"Only that I know he has gone back to her. And you know it too."

He heard her going quietly out of the room.

Long after, he closed the house and went cautiously upstairs. She was waiting for him, in the doorway of her room, in her nightgown.

"I know it all now," she said steadily.

"It was because of her he shot the other man, wasn't it?" She saw her answer in his startled face, and closed her door quickly. He stood outside, and then he tapped lightly.

"Let me in, honey," he said. "I want to finish it. You've got a wrong idea about it."

When she did not answer he tried the door, but it was locked. He turned and went downstairs again. . . .

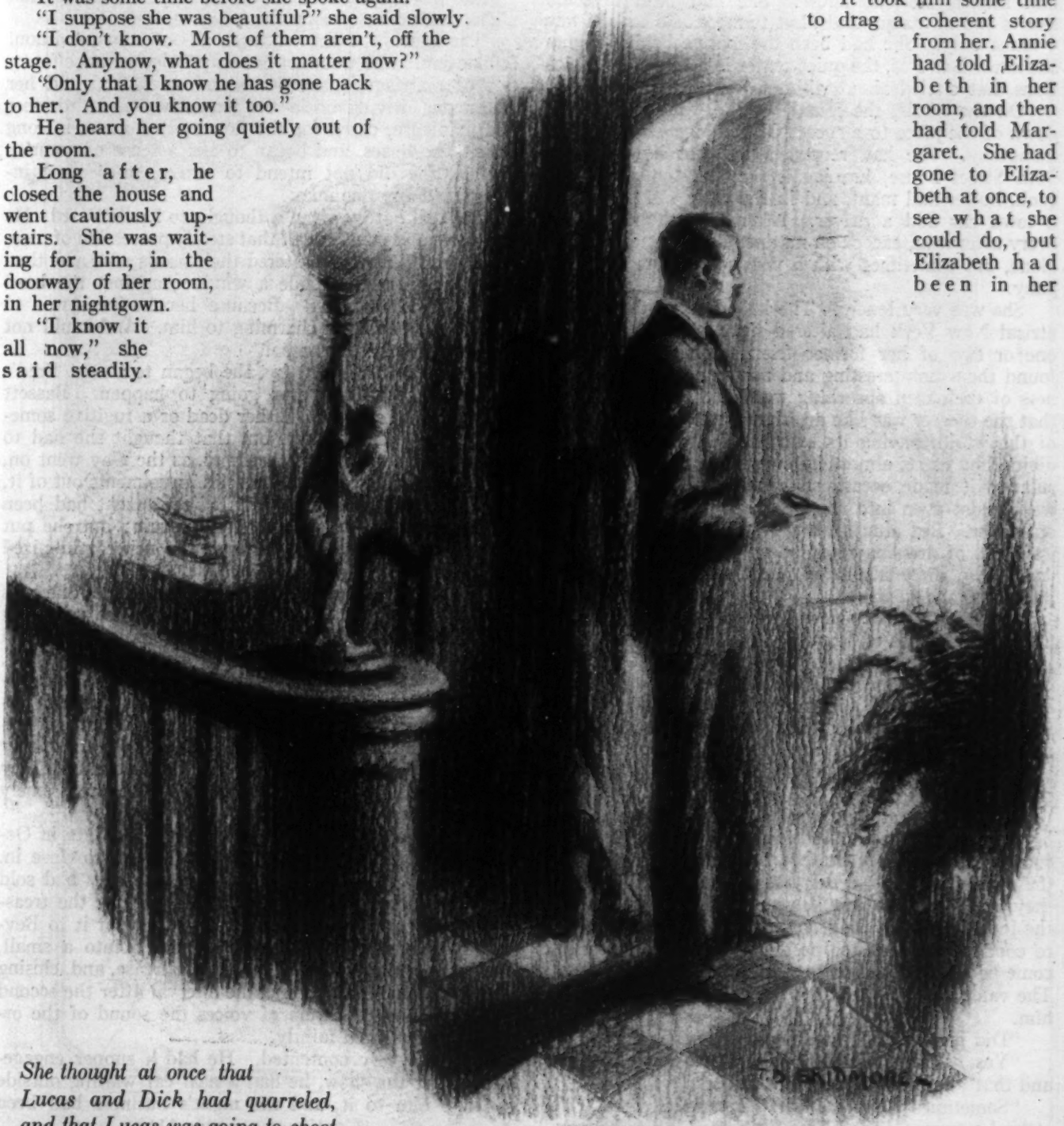
When he came home the next afternoon Margaret met him in the hall.

"She knows it, Walter."

"Knows what?"

"Knows he was back here and didn't see her. Annie blurted it out; she's got it from the Oglethorpe's laundress. Mr. Oglethorpe saw him on the street."

It took him some time to drag a coherent story from her. Annie had told Elizabeth in her room, and then had told Margaret. She had gone to Elizabeth at once, to see what she could do, but Elizabeth had been in her



*She thought at once that Lucas and Dick had quarreled, and that Lucas was going to shoot*

closet, digging among her clothes. She had got out the best frock and put it on, while her mother sat on the bed not even daring to broach the matter in her mind, and had gone out. There was a sort of cold determination in her that frightened Margaret. She had laughed a good bit, for one thing.

"She's terribly proud," she finished. "She'll do something reckless, I'm sure. It wouldn't surprise me to see her come back engaged to Wallie Sayre. I think that's where she went."

But apparently she had not, or if she had she said nothing about it. From that time on they saw a change in her; she was as loving as ever, but she affected a sort of painful brightness that was a little hard. As though she had clad herself in armor against further suffering.

For months Beverly Carlysle had remained a remote and semi-mysterious figure. She had been in some hearts and in many minds, but to most of them she was a name only. She had been the motive behind events she never heard of, the quiet center in a tornado of emotions that circled about without touching her.

On the whole, she found her life, with the settling down of the piece to a successful run, one of prosperous monotony. She had reopened and was living in the 56th Street house, keeping a simple establishment of cook, butler and maid, and in the early fall she added a town car and a driver. After that she drove out every afternoon, except on matinee days, almost always alone, but sometimes with a young girl from the company.

She was very lonely. The kaleidoscope that is theatrical New York had altered since she left it. Only one or two of her former friends remained, and she found them uninteresting and narrow with the narrowness of their own absorbing world. She had forgotten that the theater was like an island, cut off from the rest of the world, having its own politics, its own society divided by caste, almost its own religion. Out of its insularity it made occasional excursions to dinners and week ends; even into marriage, now and then with an outlander. But almost always it went back, eager for its home of dressing room and footlights, of stage entrances up dirty alleys, of doorkeepers and managers and parts and costumes.

Occasionally she had callers, men she had met or who were brought to see her. She saw them over a tea table, judged them remorselessly, and eliminated gradually all but one or two. She watched her dignity and her reputation with the care of an ambitious woman trying to live down the past, and she succeeded measurably well. Now and then a critic spoke of her as a new Maude Adams, and those notices she kept and treasured.

But she was always uneasy. Never since the night he had seen Judson Clark in the theater had they rung up without her brother having carefully combed the house with his eyes. She knew her limitations; they would have to ring down if she ever saw him over the footlights. And the season had brought its incidents, to connect her with the past. One night Gregory had come back and told her Jean Melis was in the balcony. The valet was older and heavier, but he had recognized him.

"Did he see you?" was her first question.

"Yes. What about it? He never saw me but once, and that was at night and out of doors."

"Sometimes I think I can't stand it, Fred. The eternal suspense, the waiting for something to happen."

"If anything was going to happen, it would have done it months ago. Bassett has given it up, and Jud's dead. Even Wilkins knows that."

She turned on him angrily.

"You haven't a heart, have you? You're glad he's dead."

"Not at all. As long as he kept under cover he was all right. But if he is, I don't see why you should fool yourself into thinking you're sorry. It's the best solution of a number of things."

"What do you suppose brought Jean Melis here?"

"What? To see the best play in New York. Besides, why not allow the man a healthy curiosity? He was pretty closely connected with a hectic part of your life, my dear. Now buck up, and for the Lord's sake, forget the Frenchman. He's got nothing."

"He saw me that night, on the stairs. He never took his eyes off me at the inquest."

She gave, however, an excellent performance that night, and nothing more was heard of the valet.

There were other alarms, all of them without foundation. She went on her way, rejected an offer or two of marriage, spent her mornings in bed and her afternoons driving or in the hands of her hairdresser and manicure, cared for the flowers that came in long casket-like boxes, and began to feel a sense of security again. She did not intend to marry, or become interested in any one man.

She had hardly given a thought to Leslie Ward. He had come and gone, one of that steady procession of men, mostly married, who battered their heads now and then like night beetles outside a window, against the hard glass of her ambition. Because her business was to charm, she had been charming to him. And could not always remember his name!

As the months went by, she began to accept Fred's verdict, that nothing was going to happen. Bassett was back and at work. Either dead or a fugitive somewhere was Judson Clark, but that thought she had to keep out of her mind. Sometimes, as the play went on, and she was able to make her solid investments out of it, she wondered if her ten years of retirement had been all the price she was to pay for his ruin; but she put that thought away too, although she never minimized her responsibility when she faced it.

But her price had been heavy, at that. She was childless and alone, lavishing her aborted maternity on a brother who was living his prosperous, cheerful and not too moral life at her expense. Fred was, she knew, slightly drunk with success; he attended to his minimum of labor with the least possible effort, had an expensive apartment on the Drive, and neglected her except when he needed money. She began to see, as other women had seen before her, that her success had by taking away the necessity for initiative, been extremely bad for him.

That was the situation when, one night late in October, the trap of Bassett's devising began to close in. It had been raining, but in spite of that they had sold standing room to the fire limit. Having got the treasurer's report on the night's business and sent it to Beverly's dressing room, Gregory wandered into a small, low-ceiled office under the balcony staircase, and, closing the door, sat down. It was the interval after the second act, and above the hum of voices the sound of the orchestra penetrated faintly.

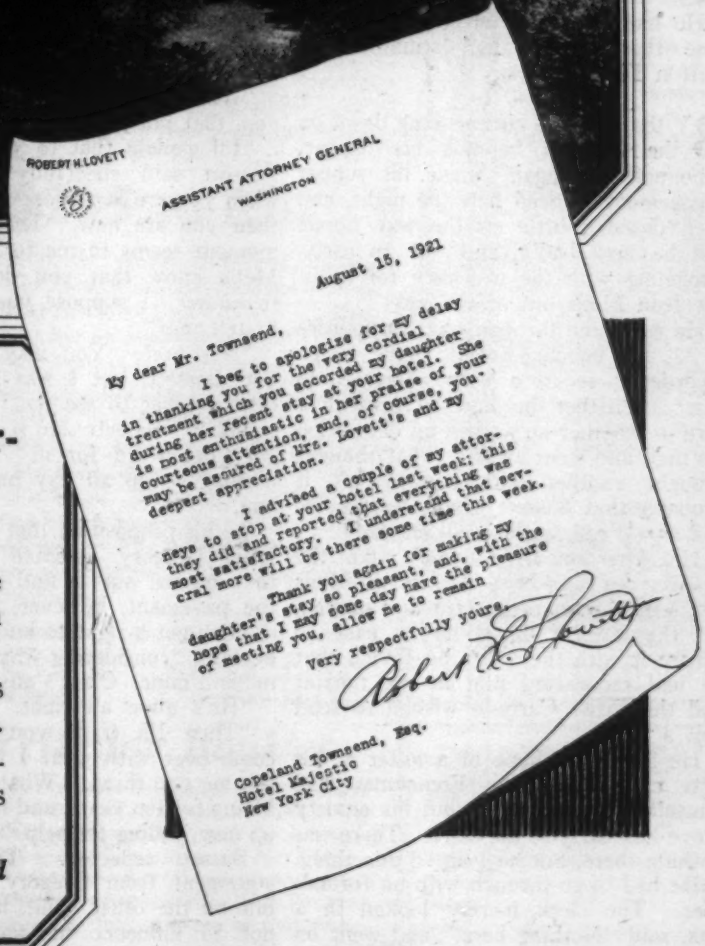
He was very contented. He had a supper engagement after the show, he had a neat car waiting outside to take him to it, and the night's business had been

(*Continued on page* 116)

# Panorama of Central Park and Upper Fifth Avenue viewed from

# HOTEL MAJESTIC

CENTRAL PARK WEST AT 72nd ST — NEW YORK CITY



ROBERT H. LOVETT

ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL

WASHINGTON

August 15, 1921

My dear Mr. Townsend,

I beg to apologize for my delay in thanking you for the very cordial treatment which you accorded my daughter during her recent stay at your hotel. She is most enthusiastic in her praise of your courteous attention, and, of course, you may be assured of Mrs. Lovett's and my deepest appreciation.

I advised a couple of my attorneys to stop at your hotel last week; this they did and reported that everything was most satisfactory. I understand that several more will be there some time this week.

Thank you again for making my daughter's stay so pleasant, and, with the hope that I may some day have the pleasure of meeting you, allow me to remain

Very respectfully yours,

Robert H. Lovett

Copeland Townsend, Esq.
Hotel Majestic
New York City

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"Atmosphere is an expression of its caste, dependent upon its clientele.

"We have given our guests service. Our guests have given us appreciation."

***Copeland Townsend***

extraordinary. He consulted his watch and then picked up an evening paper. A few moments later he found himself reading, over and over, a small notice inserted among the personals.

Personal: Jean Melis, who was in Norada, Wyoming, during the early fall of 1910, please communicate with L22, this office.

The orchestra was still playing outside; the silly giggling crowds were moving back to their seats, and somewhere, Jean Melis, or the friends of Jean Melis, who would tell him of it, were reading that message.

He got his hat and went out, forgetful of the neat car at the curb, of the supper engagement, of the night's business, and wandered down the street through the rain. But his first uneasiness passed quickly. He saw Bassett in the affair, and probably Clark himself, still living and tardily determined to clear his name. But if the worst came to the worst, what could they do? They could go only so far, and then they would have to quit.

It would be better, however, if they did not see Melis. Much better; there was no use involving a simple situation. And Bev could be kept out of it altogether, until it was over. Ashamed of his panic, he went back to the theater, got a railway schedule and looked up trains. He should have done it long before, he recognized; have gone to Bassett in the spring. But how could he have known then that Bassett was going to make a life-work of the case?

He had only one uncertainty. Suppose that Bassett had stumbled on Clifton Hines?

BY the time the curtain rang down on the last act he was his dapper, debonnair self again, made his supper engagement, danced half the night, and even dozed a little on the way home. But he slept badly, and was up early, struggling with the necessity for keeping Jean Melis out of the way.

He wondered through what formalities L 22, for instance, would have to go in order to secure a letter addressed to him? Whether he had to present a card or whether he walked in, demanded his mail and went away? That thought brought another with it. Wasn't it probable that Bassett was in New York, and would call for his mail himself?

He determined finally to take the chance, claim to be L 22, and if Melis had seen the advertisement and replied, get the letter. It would be easy to square it with the valet, by saying that he had recognized him in the theater and that Miss Carlysle wished to send him a box.

He had small hope of a letter at his first call, unless the Frenchman had himself seen the notice, but his anxiety drove him early to the office. There was nothing there, but he learned one thing.

He had to go through with no formalities. The clerk merely looked in a box, said "Nothing here," and went on about his business. At eleven o'clock he went back again, and after a careful scrutiny of the crowd, presented himself once more.

"L 22? Here you are."

# The Breaking Point

(*Continued from page* 114)

He had the letter in his hand. He had glanced at it, and had thrust it deep in his pocket, when he felt a hand on his shoulder. He wheeled and faced Bassett.

"I thought I recognized that back," said the reporter, cheerfully. "Come over here, old man. I want to talk to you."

But he held to Gregory's shoulder. In a corner Bassett dropped the friendliness he had assumed for the clerk's benefit, and faced him with cold anger.

"I'll have that letter now, Gregory," he said. "And I've got a damned good notion to lodge an information against you."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Forget it. I was behind you when you asked for that letter. Give it here. I want to show you something."

Suddenly, with the letter in his hand, Bassett laughed, and then tore it open. There was only a sheet of blank paper inside.

"I wasn't sure you'd see it, and I didn't think you'd fall for it if you did," he observed. "But I was pretty sure you didn't want me to see Melis. Now I know it."

"Well, I didn't," Gregory said sullenly.

"Just the same, I expect to see him. The day's early yet, and that's not a common name. But I'll take darned good care you don't get any more letters from here."

"What do you think Melis can tell you, that you don't know?"

"I'll explain that to you some day," Bassett said cheerfully. "Some day when you are in a more receptive mood than you are now. The point at this moment seems to me to be, what does Melis know that you don't want me to know? I suppose you don't intend to tell me?"

"Not here. You may believe it or not, Bassett, but I was going to your town tonight to see you."

"Well," Bassett said sceptically, "I've got your word for it. And I've got nothing to do all day but to listen to you."

To his proposition that they go to his hotel Gregory assented sullenly, and they moved out to find a taxicab. On the pavement, however, he held back.

"I've got a right to know something," he said, "considering what he's done to me and mine. Clark's alive, I suppose?"

"He's alive all right."

"Then I'll trade you, Bassett. I'll come over with what I know, if you'll tell me one thing. What sent him into hiding for ten years, and makes him turn up now, yelling for help?"

Bassett reflected. The offer of a statement from Gregory was valuable, but on the other hand, he was anxious not to influence his narrative. And Gregory saw his uncertainty. He planted himself firmly on the pavement.

"How about it?" he demanded.

"I'll tell you this much, Gregory. He never meant to bring the thing up again. In a way it's me you're up against. Not Clark. And you can be pretty sure I know what I'm doing. I've got Clark, and I've got the report of the coroner's inquest, and I'll get Melis. I'm going to get to the bottom of this if I have to dig a hole that buries me."

In a taxicab Gregory sat tense and erect, gnawing at his blonde mustache. After a time he said:

"What are you after, in all this? The story, I suppose. And the money. I daresay you're not doing it for love."

Bassett surveyed him appraisingly.

"You wouldn't understand my motives if I told you. As a matter of fact, he doesn't want the money."

Gregory sneered.

"Don't kid yourself," he said. "However, as a matter of fact, I don't think he'll take it. It might cost too much. Where is he? Shooting pills again?"

"You'll see him in about five minutes."

IF the news was a surprise, Gregory gave no evidence of it, except to comment:

"You're a capable person, aren't you? I'll bet you could tune a piano if you were put to it."

He carried the situation well, the reporter had to admit; the only evidence he gave of strain was that the hands with which he lighted a cigarette were unsteady. He surveyed the obscure hotel at which the cab stopped with a sneering smile, and settled his collar as he looked it over.

"Not advertising to the world that you're in town, I see."

"We'll do that, just as soon as we're ready. Don't worry."

The laugh he gave at that struck unpleasantly on Bassett's ears. But inside the building he lost some of his jauntiness. "Queer place to find Judson Clark," he said once.

And again:

"You'd better watch him when I go in. He may bite me."

To which Bassett grimly returned: "He's probably rather particular what he bites."

He was uneasily conscious that Gregory, while nervous and tense, was carrying the situation with a certain assurance; if he was acting it was very good acting. And that opinion was strengthened when he threw open the door and Gregory advanced into the room.

"Well, Clark," he said coolly, "I guess you didn't expect to see me, did you?"

He made no offer to shake hands, as Dick turned from the window, nor did Dick make any overtures. But there was no emnity at first, in either face; Gregory was easy and assured, Dick grave, and, Bassett thought, slightly impatient. From that night in his apartment the reporter had realized that he was constantly fighting a sort of passive resistance in Dick, a determination not at any cost to involve Beverly. Behind that, too, he felt that still another battle was going on, one at which he could only guess, but which made Dick sombre at times and gravely quiet always.

"I meant to look you up," was his reply to Gregory's nonchalant greeting.

"Well, your friend here did that for you," Gregory said, and smiled across at Bassett. "He has his own methods, and I'll say they're effectual."

He took off his overcoat and flung it on the bed, and threw a swift, appraising glance at Dick. It was on Dick that he was banking, not on Bassett. He hated and feared Bassett. He hated Dick, but he was not afraid of him. He lighted a cigarette and faced Dick with a malicious smile.

"So here we are, again, Jud," he said. "But with this change—that now it's you who are the respectable member of the community, and I'm the—well, we'll call it the butterfly."

There was unmistakable insult in his tone, and Dick caught it.

"Then I take it you're still living off your sister?"

The contempt in Dick's voice whipped the color to Gregory's face and clenched his fist. But he relaxed in a moment and laughed.

"Don't worry, Bassett," he said, his eyes on Dick. "We haven't any reason to like each other, but he's bigger than I am. I won't hit him." Then he hardened his voice. "But I'll remind you, Clark, that personally I don't give a — — whether you swing or not. Also that I can keep my mouth shut, walk out of here, and have you in quod in the next hour, if I decide to."

"But you won't," Bassett said smoothly. "You won't any more than you did it last spring, when you sent that little letter of yours to David Livingstone."

"No. You're right. I won't. But if I tell you what I came here to say, Bassett, get this straight: It's not because I'm afraid of you, or of *him*. Donaldson's dead. What value would Melis's testimony have after ten years, if you put him on the stand? It's not that. It's because you'll put your blundering foot into it and ruin her career, unless I tell you the truth."

It was to Bassett then that he told his story, he and Bassett sitting, Dick standing with his elbow on the mantelpiece, tall and weary and almost detached.

"I've got to make my own position plain in this," he said. "I didn't like Clark, and I kept her from marrying him. There was one time, before she met Lucas, when she almost did it. I was away when she decided on that fool trip to the Clark ranch. We couldn't get a New York theater until November, and she had some time, so they went. I've got her story of what happened there. You can check it up with what you know."

He turned to Dick for a moment.

"You were drinking pretty hard that night, but you may remember this: She had quarreled with Lucas at dinner that night and with you. That's true, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"She went to her room and began to pack her things. Then she thought it over, and she decided to try to persuade Lucas to go, too. Things had begun all right, but they were getting strained and unpleasant. She went down the stairs, and Melis saw her — the valet. The living room was dark, but


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there was a light coming through the billiard room door, and against it she saw the figure of a man in the doorway. He had his back to her, and he had a revolver in his hand. She ran across the room, when he heard her and turned, she saw it was Lucas. Do you remember, Jud, having a revolver and Lucas taking it from you?"

"No. Donaldson testified I'd had a revolver."

"Well, that's how we figure he'd got the gun. She thought at once that Lucas and you had quarreled, and that he was going to shoot. She tried to take it from him but he was drunk and stubborn. It went off and killed him."

Bassett leaned forward.

"That's straight, is it?"

"I'm telling you."

"Then why in God's name didn't she say that at the inquest?"

"SHE was afraid it wouldn't be believed. Look at the facts. She'd quarreled with Lucas. There had been a notorious situation with regard to Clark. And remember this. She had done it. I know her well enough, however, to say that she would have confessed, eventually, but Clark had beaten it. It was reasonably sure that he was lost in the blizzard. You've got to allow for that."

Bassett said nothing. After a silence Dick spoke:

"What about the revolver?"

"She had it in her hand. She dropped it and stood still, too stunned to scream. Lucas, she says, took a step or two forward, and fell through the doorway. Donaldson came running in, and you know the rest."

Bassett was the first to break the silence.

"She will be willing to testify to that now, of course?"

"And stand trial?"

"Not necessarily. Clark would be on trial. He's been indicted. He has to be tried."

"Why does he have to be tried? He's free now. He's been free for ten years. And I tell you as an honest opinion that the thing would kill her. Accident and all, she did it. And there would be some who'd never believe she hadn't tired of Lucas, and wanted the Clark money."

"That's a chance she'll have to take," Bassett said doggedly.

"The only living witness who could be called would be the valet. And remember this: for ten years he has believed that she did it. He'll have built up a story by this time, perhaps unconsciously, that might damn her."

Dick moved.

"There's only one thing to do. You're right, Gregory. I'll never expose her to that."

"You're crazy," Bassett said angrily.

"Not at all. I told you I wouldn't hide behind a woman. As a matter of fact, I've learned what I wanted. Lucas wasn't murdered. I didn't shoot him. That's what really matters. I'm no worse off than I was before; considerably better, in fact. And I don't see what's to be gained by going any further."

In spite of his protests, Bassett was compelled finally to agree. He was sulky and disspirited. He saw the profound anti-climax to all his effort, of Dick wandering out again, legally dead and legally guilty, and he swore roundly under his breath.

"All right," he grunted at last. "I guess that's the last word, Gregory. But you tell her from me that if she doesn't re-open the matter of her own accord, she'll have a man's life on her conscience."

"I'll not tell her anything about it. I'm not only her brother; I'm her manager now. And I'm not kicking any hole in the boat that floats me."

He was self-confident and slightly insolent; the hands with which he lighted a fresh cigarette no longer trembled, and the glance he threw at Dick was triumphant and hostile.

"As a man sows, Clark," he said. "You sowed hell for a number of people once."

Bassett had to restrain an impulse to kick him out of the door.

When he had gone Bassett turned to Dick, with assumed lightness.

"Well," he said, "here we are, all dressed up and nowhere to go!"

He wandered around the room, restless and disappointed. He knew, and Dick knew, that they had come to the end of the road, and that nothing lay beyond. In his own unpleasant way Fred Gregory had made a case for his sister that tied their hands, and the crux of the matter had lain in his final gibe: "As a man sows, Clark, so shall he reap." The moral issue was there.

"I suppose the Hines story goes by the board, eh?" he commented after a pause.

"Yes. Except that I wish I'd known about him when I could have done something. He's my half brother, any way you look at it, and he had a rotten deal. Sometimes a man sows," he added, with a wry smile, "and the other fellow reaps."

Bassett went out after that, going to the office on the chance of a letter from Melis, but there was none. When he came back he found Dick standing over a partially packed suitcase, and knew that they had come to the end of the road indeed.

"What's the next step?" he asked bluntly.

"I'll have to leave here. It's too expensive."

"And after that, what?"

"I'll get a job. I suppose a man is as well hidden here as anywhere. I can grow a beard—that's the usual thing, isn't it?"

Bassett made an impatient gesture, and fell to pacing the floor. "It's incredible," he said. "It's monstrous. It's a joke. Here you are, without a thing against you, and hung like Mahomet's coffin, between heaven and earth. It makes me sick."

He went home that night, leaving word to have any letter for L 22 forwarded, but without much hope. His last clutch of Dick's hand had a sort of desperate finality in it, and he carried with him most of the way home the tall, grave and patiently courageous figure that saw him off with a smile. . . .

By the next afternoon's mail he received a note from New York, with a few words of comment pencilled on it in Dick's writing. "This came this evening. I sent back the money. D." The note was from Gregory and had evidently enclosed a one-hundred dollar bill. It began without superscription: "Enclosed find a hundred dollars, as I imagine funds may be short. If I were you I'd get out of here. There has been considerable excitement, and you know too many people in this burg."

Bassett sat back in his chair and studied the note.

"Now why the devil did he do that?" he reflected. He sat for some time, thinking deeply, and he came to one important conclusion. The story Gregory had told was the one which was absolutely calculated to shut off all further inquiry. They had had ten years; ten years to plan, eliminate and construct; ten years to prepare their defence, in case Clark turned up. Wasn't that why Gregory had been so assured? But he had not been content to let well enough alone; he had perhaps overreached himself.

Then what was the answer? She had killed Lucas, but was it an accident? And there must have been a witness, or she would have had nothing to fear. He wrote out on a bit of paper three names, and sat looking at them:

*Hattie Thorwald*
*Jean Melis*
*Clifton Hines*

ELIZABETH had quite definitely put Dick out of her heart. On the evening of the day she learned he had come back and had not seen her, she deliberately killed her love and decently interred it. She burned her notes and his one letter and put away her ring, performing the rites not as rites but as a shameful business to be done with quickly. She tore his photograph into bits and threw them into her waste basket, and having thus house-cleaned her room, set to work to house-clean her heart.

She found very little to do. She was numb and totally without feeling. The little painful constriction in her chest which had so often come lately with her thoughts of him was gone. She felt extraordinarily empty, but not light, and her feet dragged about the room.

She felt no sense of Dick's unworthiness, but simply that she was up against something she could not fight, and no longer wanted to fight. She was beaten, but the strange thing was that she did not care. Only, she would not be pitied. As the days went on she resented the pity that kept her in ignorance for so long and had let her wear her heart on her sleeve, and she even wondered sometimes whether the story of his loss of memory had not been false, evolved out of that pity and the desire to save her pain.

David sent for her, but she sent him a little note, formal and restrained. She would come in a day or two, but now she must get her bearings. He was to know that she was not angry, and felt it all for the best, and she was very lovingly his, Elizabeth.

She knew now that she would marry Wallie Sayre. He would have to know the truth about her, that she did not love anyone, not even her father and her mother. She pretended to care for fear of hurting them, but she was actually frozen quite hard. She did not believe in love. It was a terrible thing, to be avoided by anyone who wanted to get along, and this avoiding was really quite simple. One simply stopped feeling.

On the Sunday after she had come to this comfortable knowledge she sat in the church as usual, in the choir stalls, and suddenly she hated the church. She hated the way the larynx of Henry Wallace, the tenor, stuck out like a crab-apple over his low collar. She hated the fat double chin of the bass. She hated the talk about love and the sure rewards of virtue, and the faces of the congregation, smug and sure of salvation.

She went to the choir master after the service to hand in her resignation. And did not, because it had occurred to her that it might look, to use Nina's word, as though she were crushed. Crushed! That was funny.

Wallie Sayre was waiting for her outside, and she went up with him to lunch, and afterwards they played golf. They had rather an amusing game, and once she had to sit down on a bunker and laugh until she was weak, while he fought his way out of a pit. Crushed, indeed! . . . .

So the weaving went on, almost completed now. With Wallie Sayre biding his time, but fairly sure of the result. With Jean Melis happening on a two days' old paper, and reading over and over a notice addressed to him. With Leslie Ward, neither better nor worse than his kind, seeking adventure in a bypath, which was East 56th Street. And with Dick wandering the streets of New York after twilight, and standing once, with his coat collar turned up against the rain, outside of the Metropolitan Club, where the great painting of his father hung over a mantel-piece.

Now that he was near Beverly, Dick hesitated to see her. He felt no resentment at her long silence, or at his exile which had resulted from it. He made excuses for her, recognized his own contribution to the catastrophe, knew too, that nothing was to be gained by seeing her again. But he determined finally to see her once more, and then to go away, leaving her to peace and to success.

She would know now that she had nothing to fear from him. All he wanted was to satisfy the hunger that was in him by seeing her, and then to go away.

Curiously, that hunger to see her had been in abeyance while Bassett was with him. It was only when he was alone again that it came up; and although he knew that, he was conscious of another fact; that every word, every picture of her on the great hoardings which walled in every empty lot, everything, indeed, which brought her into the reality of the present, loosened by so much her hold on him out of the past.

When he finally went to the 56th Street house it was on impulse. He had

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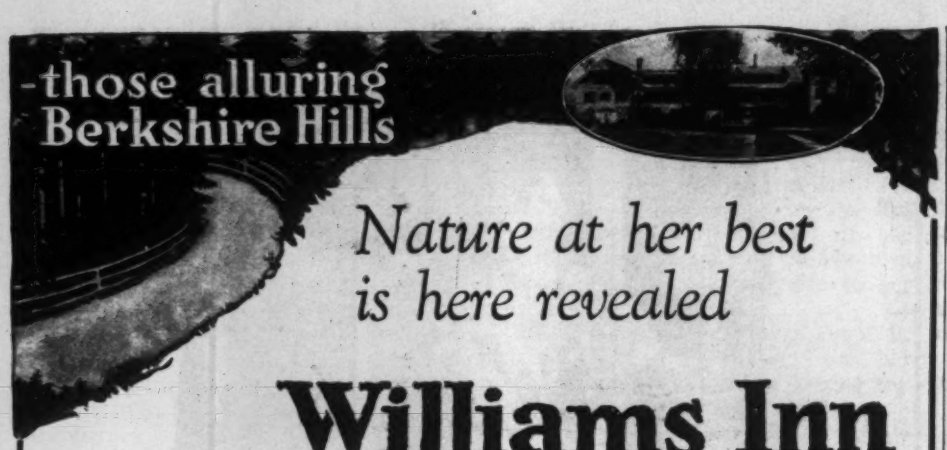

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meant to pass it, but he found himself stopping, and half angrily made his determination. He would follow the cursed thing through now and get it over. Perhaps he had discounted it too much in advance, waited too long, hoped too much. Perhaps it was simply that that last phase was already passing. But he felt no thrill, no expectancy, as he rang the bell and was admitted to the familiar hall.

It was peopled with ghosts, for him. Upstairs, in the drawing room that extended across the front of the house, she had told him of her engagement to Howard Lucas. Later on, coming back from Europe, he had gone back there to find Lucas installed in the house, his cigars on the table, his photograph on the piano, his books scattered about, and Lucas himself, smiling, handsome and triumphant on the hearth rug, dressed for dinner except for a brocaded dressing gown, putting his hand familiarly on Beverly's shoulder, and calling her "old girl."

He wandered into the small room to the right of the hall, where in other days he had waited to be taken upstairs, and stood looking out of the window. He heard some one, a caller, come down, get into his overcoat in the hall and go out, but he was not interested. He did not know that Leslie Ward had stood outside the door for a minute, saw and recognized him, and then slammed out.

He was quite steady as the butler preceded him up the stairs. He even noticed certain changes in the house, the door at the landing converted into an arch, leaded glass in the dining room windows beyond it. But he caught a glimpse of himself in a mirror, and saw himself a shabby contrast to the former days.

He faced her, still with that unexpected composure, and he saw her very little changed. Even the movement with which she came toward him with both hands out was familiar.

"Jud!" she said. "Oh, my dear!"

He saw that she was profoundly moved, and suddenly he was sorry for her. Sorry for the years behind them both, for the burden she had carried, for the tears in her eyes.

"Dear old Bev!" he said.

She put her head against his shoulder, and cried unrestrainedly, and he held her there, saying small gentle soothing things, smoothing her hair. But all the time he knew that life had been playing him another trick; he felt a great tenderness for her and profound pity, but he did not love her, or want her. He saw that after all the suffering and waiting, the death and exile, he was left at the end with nothing. Nothing at all.

When she was restored to a sort of tense composure, he found to his discomfort that woman-like she intended to abase herself thoroughly and completely. She implored his forgiveness for his long exile, gazing at him humbly, and when he said in a matter-of-fact tone that he had been happy, with a look that showed she thought he was lying to save her unhappiness.

"You are trying to make it easier for me. But I know, Jud."

"I'm telling you the truth," he said, patiently. "There's one point I didn't think necessary to tell your brother. For a good while I didn't remember anything about it. If it hadn't been for that — well, I don't know. Anyhow, don't look at me as though I wilfully saved you. I didn't."

She sat still, pondering that, and twisting a ring on her finger.

"What do you mean to do?" she asked, after a pause.

"I don't know. I'll find something."

"You won't go back to your work?"

"I don't see how I can. I'm in hiding, in a sort of casual fashion."

To his intense discomfiture she began to cry again. She couldn't go through with it. She would go back to Norada and tell the whole thing. She had let Fred influence her, but she saw now she couldn't do it. But for the first time he felt that in this one thing she was not sincere. Her grief and abasement had been real enough, but now he felt she was acting.

"Suppose we don't go into that now," he said gently. "You've had about all you can stand." He got up awkwardly. "I suppose you are playing to-night?"

She nodded, looking up at him dumbly.

"Better lie down, then, and — forget me." He smiled down at her.

"I've never forgotten you, Jud. And now, seeing you again — I — "

Her face worked. She continued to look up at him piteously. The appalling truth came to him then, and that part of him which had remained detached and aloof, watching, almost smiled at the irony. She cared for him. Out of her memories she had built up something to care for, something no more himself than she was the woman of his dreams; but with this difference, that she was clinging, woman-fashion, to the thing she had built, and he had watched it crumble before his eyes.

"Will you promise to go and rest?"

"Yes. If you say so."

She was acquiescent and humble. Her eyes were soft, faithful, child-like.

"I've suffered so, Jud."

"I know."

"You don't hate me, do you?"

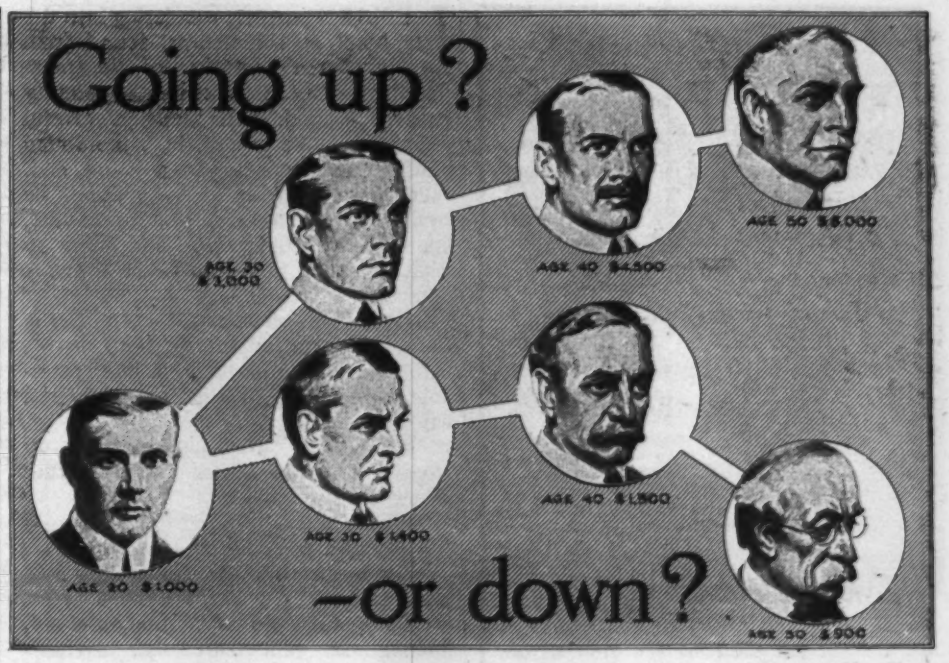
"Why should I? Just remember this: while you were carrying this burden, I was happier than I'd ever been. I'll tell you about it some time."

She got up, and he perceived that she expected him again to take her in his arms. He felt ridiculous and resentful, and rather as though he was expected to kiss the hand that had beaten him, but when she came close to him he put an arm around her shoulders.

"Poor Bev!" he said. "We've made pretty much a mess of it, haven't we?"

He patted her and let her go, and her eyes followed him as he left the room. The elder brotherliness of that embrace had told her the truth as he could never have hurt her in words. She went back to the chair where he had sat, and leaned her cheek against it.

After a time she went slowly upstairs and into her room. When her maid came in she found her before the mirror of her dressing table, staring at her reflection with hard, appraising eyes. . .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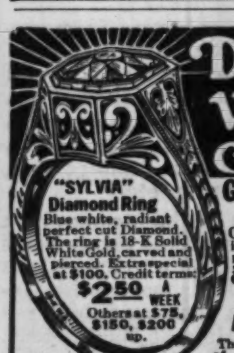

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LESLIE'S partner, wandering into the hotel at six o'clock, found from the disordered condition of the room that he had been back, had apparently bathed, shaved, and made a careful toilet, and gone out again. Joe found himself unexpectedly at a loose end. Filled with suppressed indignation, he commenced to dress, getting out a shirt, hunting his evening studs, and lining up what he meant to say to Leslie over his defection.

Then, at a quarter to seven, Leslie came in, top-hatted and morning coated, with a yellowing gardenia in his buttonhole and his patent leather shoes covered with dust.

"Hello, Les," Joe said, glancing up from a laborious struggle with a stud. "Been to a wedding?"

"Why?"

"You look like it."

"I made a call, and since then I've been walking."

"Some walk, I'd say," Joe observed, looking at him shrewdly. "What's wrong, Les? Fair one turn you down?"

"Go to hell," Leslie said irritably.

He flung off his coat and jerked at his tie. Then, with it hanging loose, he turned to Joe.

"I'm going to tell you something. I know it's safe with you, and I need some advice. I called on a woman this afternoon. You know who she is. Beverly Carlysle."

Joe whistled softly.

"That's not the point," Leslie said, in a truculent voice. "I'm not defending myself. She's a friend; I've got a right to call there if I want to."

"Sure you have," soothed Joe.

"Well, you know the situation at home, and who Livingstone actually is. The point is that, while that poor kid at home is sitting around killing herself with grief, Clark's gone back to her. To Beverly Carlysle."

"How do you know?"

"Know? I saw him this afternoon, at her house."

His thoughts were a chaotic and unpleasant mixture of jealousy, fear of Nina, anxiety over Elizabeth, and the sense of a lost romantic adventure. After a while he got up.

"She's a nice kid," he said. "I'm fond of her. And I don't know what to do."

Suddenly Joe grinned.

"I see," he said. "And you can't tell her, or the family, where you saw him!"

"Not without raising the deuce of a row."

He began, automatically, to dress for dinner. Joe moved around the room, rang for a waiter, ordered orange juice and ice, and produced a bottle of gin from his bag. Leslie did not hear him nor the later preparation of the cocktail. He was reflecting bitterly on the fact that a man who married built himself a wall against romance, a wall compounded of his own new sense of responsibility, of family ties and fear.

Joe brought him a cocktail.

"Drink it, old dear," he said. "And when it's down I'll tell you a few little things about playing around with ladies who have a past. Here's to forgetting 'em."

Leslie took the glass.

"Right-o," he said.

He went home the following day, leaving Joe to finish the business in New York. His going rather resembled a flight. Tossing sleepless the night before, he had found what many a man had discovered before him, that his love of clandestine adventure was not as strong as his caution. He had had a shock. True, his affair with Beverly had been a formless thing, a matter of imagination and a desire to assure himself that romance, for him, was not yet dead. True, too, that he had nothing to fear from Dick Livingstone. But the encounter had brought home to him the danger of this old-new game he was playing. He was running like a frightened child.

He thought of various plans. One of them was to tell Nina the truth, take his medicine of tears and coldness, and then go to Mr. Wheeler. One was to go to Mr. Wheeler, without Nina, and make his humiliating admission. But Walter Wheeler had his own rigid ideas, was uncompromising in rectitude, and would understand as only a man could that while so far as he had been only mentally unfaithful, the hope and desire had been there.

His own consciousness of that fact made him more cautious than he need have been, perhaps more self-conscious. And he genuinely cared for Elizabeth. It was, on the whole, a generous and kindly impulse that lay behind his ultimate resolution to tell her that her desertion was both wilful and cruel.

Yet, when the time came, he found it hard to tell her. He took her for a drive one evening soon after his return, forcibly driving off Wallie Sayre to do so, and eyeing surreptitiously now and then her pale, rather set face. He found a quiet lane and stopped the car there.

Then he turned and faced her.

"How've you been, little sister, while I've been wandering the gay white way?" he asked.

"I've been all right, Leslie."

"Not quite all right, I think. Have you ever thought, Elizabeth, that no man on earth is worth what you've been going through?"

"Im all right, I tell you," she said impatiently. "I'm not grieving any more. That's the truth, Les. I know now that he doesn't intend to come back, and I don't care. I never even think about him, now."

"I see," he said. "Well, that's best."

But he had not counted on her intuition, and was startled to hear her say:

"Well? Go on."

"What do you mean, go on?"

"You brought me out here to tell me something."

"Not at all. I simply—"

"Where is he? You've seen him."

He tried to meet her eyes, failed, cursed himself for a fool.

"He's alive and well, Elizabeth. I saw him in New York."

It was a full minute before she spoke again, and then her lips were stiff and her voice strained.

"Has he gone back to her? To the actress he used to care for?"

He hesitated, but he knew he would have to go on.

"Im going to tell you something,

Elizabeth. It's not very creditable to me, but I'll have to trust you. I don't want to see you wasting your life. You've got plenty of courage and a lot of spirit. And you've got to forget him."

He told her, and then he took her home. He was a little frightened, for there was something not like her in the way she had taken it, a sort of immobility that might, he thought, cover heartbreak. But she smiled when she thanked him, and went very calmly into the house.

That night she accepted Wallie Sayre.

Bassett was having a visitor. He sat in his chair, while that visitor ranged excitedly up and down the room, a short stout man, well dressed and with a mixture of servility and importance. The valet's first words, as he stood inside the door, had been significant.

"I should like to know, first, if I am talking to the police."

"No — and yes," Bassett said genially. "Come and sit down, man. What I mean is this. I am a friend of Judson Clark's, and this may or may not be a police matter. I don't know yet."

"You are a friend of Mr. Clark's? Then the report was correct. He is still alive, sir."

"Yes."

The valet got out a handkerchief and wiped his face. He was clearly moved.

"I am glad of that. Very glad. I saw some months ago, in a newspaper — where is he?"

"In New York. Now Melis, I've an idea that you know something about the crime Judson Clark was accused of. You intimated that at the inquest."

"Mrs. Lucas killed him."

"So she says," Bassett said easily.

The valet jumped and stared.

"She admits it, as the result of an accident. She also admits hiding the revolver where you found it."

"Then you do not need me."

"I'm not so sure of that."

The valet was puzzled.

"I want you to think back, Melis. You saw her go down the stairs, sometime before the shot. Later you were confident she had hidden the revolver, and you made a second search for it. Why? You hadn't heard her testimony at the inquest then. Clark had run away. Why didn't you think Clark had done it?"

"Because I thought she was having an affair with another man. I have always thought she did it."

Bassett nodded.

"I thought so. What made you think that?"

"I'll tell you. She went west without a maid, and Mr. Clark got a Swedish woman from a ranch near to look after her, a woman named Thorwald. She lived at her own place and came over every day. One night, after Mrs. Thorwald had started home, I came across her down the road near the irrigator's house, and there was a man with her. They didn't hear me behind them, and he was giving her a note for some one in the house."

"Why not for one of the servants?"

"That's what I thought then, sir. It wasn't my business. But I saw the same man later on, hanging about the place

(*Continued on page* 127)

*Only one-fifth of the buildings owned by the Bell System are shown in this picture.*

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# Choosing a Bond

## By Paul Tomlinson

BONDS are of such various kinds, and the analyzing of them is such an intricate and difficult process, that judging of their worth is really a life vocation. When it is borne in mind that there are literally thousands of bonds in existence it is easy to understand that no one really is competent to pass judgment on any particular bond without a thorough investigation. Further, the investment value of a given bond is subject to constant change, and only those who are in possession of the latest figures relating to it are able to determine its present worth. All well equipped banking offices have statistical departments whose duty it is to possess themselves of all the available information which relates to standard bond investments, and to supply this information to the other departments of the organization for their guidance in carrying on the company's business. This information is also at the disposal of clients and customers.

It takes an inquiring and investigating type of mind, and oftentimes years of experience, to decide just what position a bond holds in the financial structure of a big business enterprise. The value of a bond is dependent upon a variety of factors, and all of them must be taken into consideration and carefully weighed before the correct conclusion can be reached.

Bonds are among the very best investments there are, but there are good bonds and bad bonds, excellent bonds and medium grade bonds, and before buying it is no more than prudent to find out what sort of a rating the bond has that you are considering. The safe rule under these circumstances is the one that applies to the business investing generally—consult your banker.

There are, however, a few elementary points in connection with analyzing bond investments which everyone can bear in mind.

First of all it is unwise to buy a bond of a corporation which is not engaged in a necessary and reasonably stable line of business. During the war there was much talk of "essential industries", and they were always favored by the Government at the expense of those whose existence was not necessary to the successful prosecution of the war. Investors likewise, in buying bonds, should favor the securities of those corporations whose output is essential to the welfare and prosperity of the country. The reason for this is twofold. First, such corporations are making a real contribution to the life of the nation and deserve encouragement. Second, the man who puts his money into the securities of such a corporation is taking proper precautions for the safeguarding of his capital. Both reasons are excellent ones.

The matter of earnings should be carefully investigated. Bond interest is a fixed charge upon earnings, and for a bond to be rated a high grade investment earnings over a period of several years should have averaged at least twice the requirements for interest on all bond and other debts outstanding. Remember that if bond interest is not paid the bondholders can foreclose and sell the property. In order to be properly protected against the necessity of such an unfortunate contingency, interest should be earned by a sufficiently ample margin to make it seem extremely remote.

Another point to be settled is the position your bond holds in the financial structure of the corporation. A first mortgage of course is better than a second mortgage, and the nearer your bond comes to being an absolute first charge upon the corporation's earnings the better its investment position. One should always find out what charges come ahead of his bond and it is also well to know what comes after it. The name by which a bond is called means something, of course, but is by no means conclusive. A "first mortgage and refunding bond" may be a first mortgage on the property, but very possibly upon only a small portion of it, and may be junior to several other outstanding issues. It is better to be safe than sorry.

A company's capitalization is still another matter to be considered. Look at the statement under the head of liabilities and see what proportion the capital stock bears to the total of bonded debt. As a general proposition at least one-third of a corporation's capitalization should consist of stock.

Another rule is one which applies to all investments. The bonds of a newly organized enterprise are more speculative than those of an established business. This is elementary, but the truth of it can be appreciated by anyone who gives it a few moments' thought.

Bonds being secured by property it is well to find out about the property. Plants depreciate and sometimes become obsolete and proper provision should be made for these two charges. The amount of floating debts—such as notes payable —is an extremely important item, and even first mortgage bonds have been known to succumb before the enemy of current indebtedness.

The factor of marketability is often of the greatest importance. An investment easy to sell is an investment easily and quickly convertible into cash, and there is always the possibility of needing cash on short notice at some time. When that time comes the possession of a readily marketable bond is a real asset.

Do not pay too much attention to the yield of a bond. The important points to consider are the security for it, and the earnings of the issuing corporation. A first mortgage bond on a property which has no earning power is not worth much, for if there are no earnings the property itself can have little value.

If there are no earnings there will be no money with which to pay interest, and if the bondholders foreclose and take over the property, the chance of their being able to sell it for enough to cover the amount of the mortgage is slight indeed.

Do not try to get too much for your money. The difference in yield between a six and a seven per cent. bond is only ten dollars a year, and ten dollars a year is not worth considering if in order to obtain the higher yield it is necessary to sacrifice safety of principal. Safety, of course, is the first requirement of any good investment.

The safety of a bond is dependent upon two factors, the security for the bond itself and the credit of the issuing company. By security is meant the value of the property pledged for the payment of the bonds. This property should be worth considerably more than the face value of the outstanding bonds and of such a kind that in case of a forced sale it would bring enough to pay off all the bondholders in full. Credit is largely dependent upon earnings. Suppose, for the sake of example, two railroad companies have bonds issued and outstanding at the rate of $50,000 for every mile of main line. Suppose that one corporation's earnings are at the rate of $10,000 a mile and the other earns only half that amount.

Obviously the bonds of the first railroad are better investments, and would naturally sell at higher prices. Credit is such an important factor that sometimes a debenture bond of a company with a high credit rating is considered an investment superior to the first mortgage bonds of a company with poor credit. It is always well, if possible, to combine both credit and security.

The inexperienced investor sometimes gets the impression that the requirements of a sound bond investment are so many and so exacting that no bond can possibly measure up to them. On the contrary, however, there are hundreds of sound bonds, and if none of them is absolutely safe, neither is anything else in this world.

But the highest grade bonds are the best investments we know of and if the investor will confine his investments to bonds of that character the chances are very slight that he will ever have cause to regret his action. If he doesn't feel qualified to make the right kind of selection for himself, remember that there are plenty of responsible bankers who are qualified to do it and the banker's knowledge and experience are always at the investor's disposal.


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These articles will discuss all classes of securities, methods of investment, and many other subjects of interest to investors.

Whether you are an experienced investor or merely a beginner, you cannot fail to derive a great deal of profit from reading these articles.

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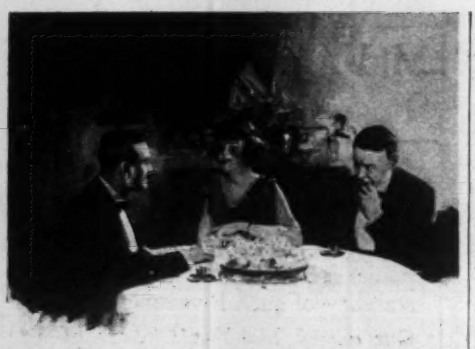
**80 Lafayette Street, New York, N. Y.**



# Which of these two men has learned the secret of 15 minutes a day?

HERE are two men, equally good-looking; equally well-dressed. You see such men at every social gathering. One of them can talk of nothing beyond the mere day's news. The other brings to every subject a wealth of side light and illustration that makes him listened to eagerly.

He talks like a man who had traveled widely, though his only travels are a business man's trips. He knows something of history and biography, of the works of great scientists, and the writings of philosophers, poets, and dramatists.

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# Questions and Answers to Financial Inquiries

Q. I own a number of shares of St. Louis-San Francisco preferred stock which cost me about $30 a share. Can you tell me if dividends are to be resumed on this stock, and also whether you would advise me to sell or hold on for a further rise? I have considered selling and reinvesting in some income producing security.

A. The earnings of the St. Louis-San Francisco have shown recent improvement, but we could not attempt to predict whether the road will resume dividends. We are not able to say whether this possibility has been considered by the board of directors. We always recommend the purchase of income producing securities, but you must decide for yourself whether you wish to sell and reinvest. If you hold on in the expectation either of dividends or higher prices you are speculating and should bear this fact in mind.

Q. I have about $10,000 to invest in the following list of suggestions:
Pacific Gas and Electric 5's — 1942.
Western Union 6½'s—1936.
Great Northern Railroad 7's — 1936.
New York Telephone 6's — 1941.
New York Edison 6½'s — 1941.
Winnipeg, Manitoba, 6's—1946.

A. It seems to us that every bond on your list is a good selection, but we believe a wider diversification would be advisable, for the number of utilities you suggest seems out of proportion. You might consider buying the Great Northern 7's, the New York Telephone 6's, the Western Union 6½'s, and the New York Edison 6½'s. Other bonds for your consideration might well be the following:
General Electric 6's — 1940.
United States Rubber 5's — 1947.
Canadian Northern 6½'s — 1946.
United Kingdom 5½'s — 1937.

Q. Do you consider Standard Oil of New Jersey preferred stock a good investment? Is this stock callable?

A. Standard Oil of New Jersey preferred stock is rated a high grade investment. It is callable at $115 a share.

Q. Please give me full information about the first mortgage thirty year gold bonds of the Richmond Terminal Railway Company.

A. These bonds are due January 1, 1952. They are secured by a closed first mortgage on the entire property of every description of the company, including extensive station and terminal facilities in the city of Richmond, Va., the entire development covering about 73 acres of ground, 1,415 feet of which front on Broad Street, the principal retail street of the city. Bonds of this issue are authorized and outstanding in the amount of $3,380,000 and the present value of the entire facilities of the company has been appraised at $4,855,977 and so reported to the Interstate Commerce Commission under the provisions of Valuation Order No. 3 of that body. These bonds are redeemable at 100 and accrued interest on any interest date on or after January 1, 1937. The payment of principal and interest is unconditionally guaranteed jointly and severally by the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad Company and the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company.

# More Letters from McCLURE'S Readers

Portage, Wash.,
April 28, 1922.

Mr. S. S. McCLURE.
Dear Sir:

I have just finished reading "The Real Ireland," in our May McCLURE'S, written undoubtedly by a "real" Irishman.

As an American, born in England, I want to thank you for that article.

It should do much to offset propaganda against England and remove many false impressions regarding both countries.

Yours for a peaceful Ireland,
GEO. T. THOMPSON.

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Sierra Madre, Calif..
April 26, 1922.

Dear MR. McCLURE:

Permit me to congratulate you upon the rejuvenation of "McCLURE'S." From cover to cover the May number is the most interesting magazine I've read since McCLURE'S of the old days, and that was the best of them all.

I do not agree with your views about Ireland, but then no man is infallible, and besides, we may both be wrong.

In any event, "more power to you and may your shadow never be less."

Sincerely,
CORNELIUS O'CONNOR.

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519 Vanderbilt Avenue,
New York City,
May 19, 1922.

Editor McCLURE'S MAGAZINE.
My dear Sir:

May I congratulate you on the May issue of McCLURE'S. It is full of good stuff. I have read with a great deal of pleasure "The War Stories," and am looking forward with interest to the other issues. "The Greatest Story of the Secret Service" is a great story. May we have more of them.

The International
Labor Service Bureau.

Yours very truly,
C. J. FOSTER,
President.

# The Breaking Point

(*Continued from page* 123)

at night, and once I saw him with her, with Mrs. Lucas, I mean. That was in the early evening. The gentlemen were out riding, and I'd gone with one of the maids to watch the sunrise from a hill. They were on some rocks, below in the canyon."

"Did you see him?"

"I couldn't recognize him, if that's what you mean. I knew something queer was going on, after that, and I watched her. She went out at night more than once. Then I told Donaldson there was somebody hanging around the place, and he set a watch."

"Fine. Now we'll go to the night Lucas was shot. Was the Thorwald woman there?"

"She had started home."

"Leaving Mrs. Lucas packing alone?"

"Yes. I hadn't thought of that. The Thorwald woman heard the shot and came back. I remember that, because she fainted upstairs and I had to carry her to a bed."

"I see. Now about the revolver."

"I located it the first time I looked for it. Donaldson and the others had searched the billiard room, so I tried the big room. It was under a chair. I left it there, and concealed myself in the room. She, Mrs. Lucas, came down late that night and hunted for it. Then she hid it where I got it later."

"I wish I knew, Melis, why you didn't bring these facts out at the inquest."

"You must remember this, sir. I had been with Mr. Clark for a long time. I knew the situation. And I thought that he had gone away that night to throw suspicion from her to himself. I was not certain what to do. I would have told all in court, but it never came for trial."

Bassett was satisfied and fairly content. After the Frenchman's departure he sat for some time, making careful notes and studying them. Supposing the man Melis had seen were Clifton Hines, a good many things would be cleared up. Some new element he had to have, if Gregory's story was to be disproved, some new and different motive. Suppose, for instance—

He got up and paced the floor back and forward, forward and back. There was just one possibility, and just one way of verifying it. He sat down and wrote out a long telegram, and then got his hat, and carried it to the telegraph office himself. He had made his last throw.

He received a reply the following day, and in a state of exhilaration bordering on madness packed his bag, and as he packed it addressed it, after the fashion of lonely men the world over.

"Just one more trip, friend cowhide," he said, "and then you and I are going to settle down again to work. But it's some trip, old arm-breaker."

He put in his pajamas and handkerchiefs, his clean socks and collars, and then he got his revolver from a drawer and added it. Just twenty-four hours later he knocked at Dick's door in a

(*Continued on page* 129)

# You too—

## can have the things you want

WHY is it some men make such enormous salaries, and others with just as many brains work a lifetime for meager wages? Why is it that in every line of sales work some men are so amazingly successful while others who have just as pleasing a personality and work just as hard, or even harder, are miserable failures, or, at best, only average plodders?

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**He will personally fit you for a position where you can make from $4,800 to $12,000 a year.**

## You Must Be a Specialist

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## Fortunes Made by Specialists

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**BANK REFERENCES** The State Banking & Trust Co. Cleveland, Ohio

But all of these men are trained paint salesmen. Paint is a semi-technical product. Only men with real paint knowledge can ever hope to enjoy these extraordinary earnings. Yet it is possible for nearly everyone. All that is required is average intelligence, a willingness to work, and the ***proper knowledge.***

## NOW! the Same Opportunity for YOU

NOW!—you, too, thanks to the Cleveland Paint Salesman's Training School, can easily acquire the knowledge that makes possible such rich earnings in the paint industry.

**And when you obtain this knowledge by completing the course we can place you *immediately*. A number of successful and highly rated companies endorse this course. They want to secure men who have completed it. This is without any cost to you whatsoever. No fees. No extras of any kind. It's the way we cooperate with our graduates.**

The course has been worked out by one of the most able paint sales managers in the country, in conjunction with one of the foremost paint chemists. The science of paint salesmanship is covered from every angle. You are taught the general fundamentals of salesmanship, and in addition just how to sell a special product—a universal one that is always in demand. You are taught about the different paint products, how and when to use them, and how to prepare every sort of surface for their use. In short, you are equipped with the knowledge that fits you to make thousands of dollars a year more than you have ever hoped for.

## Take the First Step NOW!

Remember, this course is endorsed by leading paint manufacturers. Remember, they want to secure men who have completed it. So give yourself the opportunity you have longed for. The coupon below will bring you complete details. It does not obligate you in any way. It does explain how, by a little work and study, you can fit yourself to earn enough to afford the luxuries of life that all of us crave. Make to-day the turning point in your career—mail the coupon NOW!

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313 Bangor Building, Cleveland, O.

Please send me free literature and complete information regarding your course.

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Street.....

City..... State.....

# Cave Man Stuff

BACK near the beginning of things, our prehistoric forebears would have perished from the earth if they had not understood the science of reading advertising.

The cave men didn't know much about underwear, hair tonic or phonographs, but they did have to eat. The one who could follow the track of the game he hunted, or read the meaning of a twisted leaf or broken twig, was best off in life.

Then, as now, the most consistent reader of advertising was best dressed, best fed and most contented.

There has been something of an evolution in advertising in the last few thousands of years, but the principle is just the same.

The *consistent* reader of the advertisements is invariably best informed on what to eat and where to get it; what to wear and how much to pay for it; what to do and how to do it. He's up on the most important things in life. Consequently he gets most from life.

Throughout the ages, advertising has done much to make life livable and pleasant. We owe it much.

*Let's make the most of it.*

# The Breaking Point

(*Continued from page 127*)

boarding house on West Ninth Street, found it unlocked, and went in. Dick was asleep, and Bassett stood looking down at him, with an odd sort of paternal affection. Finally he bent down and touched his shoulder.

"Wake up, old top," he said, "Wake up. I have some news for you."

To Dick the last day or two had been nightmares of loneliness. He threw caution to the winds and walked hour after hour, only to find that the street crowds, people who had left a home or were going to one, depressed him and emphasized his isolation. He had deliberately put away from him the anchor that had been Elizabeth, and had followed a treacherous memory, and now he was adrift.

He was homesick, for David, for Lucy, and with a tightening of the heart he admitted it, for Elizabeth. And he had no home. He thought of Reynolds, bent over the desk in his office; he saw the quiet tree-shaded streets of the town, and Reynolds, passing from house to house in the town, doing his work, usurping his place in the confidence and friendship of the people; he saw the very children named for him asking: "Who was I named for, mother?" He saw David and Lucy gone, and the old house abandoned.

He had moments when he wondered what would happen if he took Beverly at her word. Suppose she made her confession, re-opened the thing, to fill the papers with great head-lines, "Judson Clark not guilty. A strange story."

He saw himself going back to the curious glances of the town, never to be to them the same as before. To face them and look them down, to hear whispers behind his back, to feel himself watched and judged, on that far past of his. Suppose even that it could be kept out of the papers; Wilkins amiable and acquiescent, Beverly's confession hidden in the ruck of legal documents; and he stealing back, to go on as best he could, covering his absence with lies, and taking up his work again. But even that uneasy road was closed to him. He saw David and Lucy stooping to new and strange hypocrisies, watching with anxious old eyes the faces of their neighbors, growing defiant and hard as time went on and suspicion still followed him.

And there was Elizabeth.

He tried not to think of her, save as of some fine and tender thing he had once brushed as he passed by. Even if she still cared for him, he could, even less than David and Lucy, ask her to walk the uneasy road with him. She was young. She would forget him and marry Wallace Sayre. She would have luxury and gaiety, and the things that belong to youth.

He was not particularly bitter about that. He knew now that he had given her real love, something very different from that early madness of his, but he knew it too late . . . .

(*To be concluded in* McCLURE'S *for August.*)


# By merit alone—

## CHIROPRACTIC

**DEFINITION**

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**Ask Your Chiropractor for "The Last Word"**

has grown from an idea in the mind of one man in 1905 to the second largest health profession in the world.

There are now approximately 14,000 practitioners, more than a hundred schools and about 8,000 students.

Twenty-one state governments have recognized the science as distinct and different from anything else on earth.

This growth in less than seventeen years has been entirely through its own efforts and as a result of its own success in dealing with disease.

Chiropractic has never had a single dollar of endowment from state or national governments. It has overcome the prejudice of the public and adverse laws in every state in the Union.

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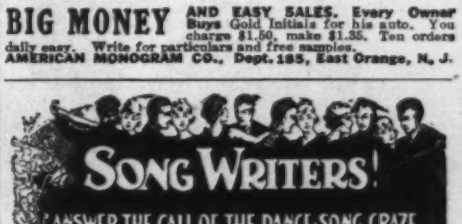
Be sure to ask for the double strength Othine, as this is sold under guarantee of money back if it fails to remove freckles.—Advt.

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# Theatre Magazine

## The One Exquisite Magazine of the Stage

**PLAYS REVIEWED:** "Mr. Hornblow Goes to the Play" and reviews the new plays each month. His criticisms are authoritative and impartial. If you live out of town they will help you plan your playgoing so when you come to town you will not waste your time or your money on a poor play.

**SPECIAL ARTICLES:** Timely and pertinent observations on the Theatre—the Drama—the better Motion Pictures are ably discussed by able writers. The Kansas City Star said that the powerful editorials of Arthur Hornblow, Editor of *Theatre Magazine*, "should be framed and hung in the home of every playgoer."

**THE AMATEUR STAGE:** Amateur play production is one of the biggest educational movements today. It is sweeping the country. During the wartime days, *Theatre Magazine* inaugurated a special Department—"The Amateur Stage"—in which the plays staged by enthusiastic groups of college players, community organizations, clubs and churches are discussed, and scenes from their plays reproduced. Instructive and constructive articles on play production are also a feature of this Department. If your club, school or church is contemplating giving a play, you may feel free to consult the Editor on any problems that may arise.

**SCENES FROM THE PLAYS:** First night views of the most striking scenes caught by our photographers, add to the fascination of *Theatre Magazine*.

**EXCERPTS FROM IMPORTANT PLAYS:** "The Circle," "Dulcy," "The Green Goddess," "Lilliom," "Mr. Pim Passes By," "Ambush," and many other plays have been published, one each month, and other plays will be added to the list as they are produced.

**ILLUSTRATIONS:** There are over a hundred exquisitely reproduced half-tone illustrations in each issue—scenes from the new plays, pictures of the players, and several full page portraits of America's best beloved stars.

**FASHIONS:** The clothes worn and sponsored by the cleverly gowned women of the Stage—the women who create fashions—are pictured and described in detail for our readers.

**THE PROMENADES OF ANGELINA:** Anne Archbald gives you in the chatter of that vivacious young person—Angelina—the latest bits of gossip, and the fads and fancies of the people of the stage.

**THE VANITY BOX:** In this section you may keep in intimate touch with what is new in toilet preparations—the perfumes and vanities that aid in keeping the stage woman beautiful.

## IF YOU—

want to know about the plays and spectacular productions that are being shown in the theatres of New York—if you want to know what new plays are appearing and what plays are on the road, consult *Theatre Magazine's* "PLAYGUIDE." Plays that continue, new plays, and the plays that are on the road are all listed in "The Playguide."

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